

CALLED TO SERVE: EQUIPPING LAYMEMBERS FOR ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION IN THE CHURCH AND SHARING THE
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| ABSTRACT..... | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | v |
| DEDICATION..... | ix |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| CHAPTER | |
| 1. MINISTRY FOCUS..... | 8 |
| 2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS..... | 24 |
| Old Testament | |
| New Testament | |
| 3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS..... | 56 |
| 4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS..... | 81 |
| 5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS..... | 96 |
| 6. PROJECT ANALYSIS..... | 117 |
| Introduction | |
| Methodology | |
| Implementation | |
| Summary of Learning | |
| Conclusion | |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 162 |

ABSTRACT

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This project sought to develop or adapt a model of ministry that created involvement of the majority of the membership into the various ministries at Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia. Qualitative research was utilized with the triangulation of Bible studies and workshops, focus groups, questionnaires and interviews. The project revealed that believers are desirous to serve in the church; however, there are barriers and challenges preventing them from serving. The conclusion created a service model that promoted a conducive and spiritual environment allowing and equipping the majority of the membership to enter into productive service in the church.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, to God be the glory! Great things the Lord continues to do in the life of my family, the church and the world at large; for it is God who has made it possible to dream about this project and provided the resources and strength to bring it to fruition. May the Lord's name be forever praised!

Deepest gratitude goes to my forever beautiful and loving wife, Harriet Dorinda Yancy for her love and dedication for over forty years. She has been by my side all these years providing the necessary support, encouragement, and sometimes, constructive criticisms and suggestions into all that I have ever ventured to accomplish. Sweetheart, I love you unconditionally. Heartfelt appreciation is also extended to my sons R. Evans Yancy, Jr. and Rodney F. Yancy for their encouragement and support. I hope this serves to remind you that you are never too old to pursue your dreams and aspirations in life. I thank God for you and our grandchildren who have provided much joy to our lives. Much appreciation is also extended to my siblings and friends.

To my pastor and mentor, the Reverend Dr. Kenneth Edward Marcus, your love and support have been tremendous over these last twenty-four years. Since my family and I joined the ministry of Turner Chapel AME Church, our lives took on a trajectory of continuous seeking of the Lord as we experienced tremendous spiritual growth and abundant blessings. As I mentioned to you on numerous occasions, the first sermon that we heard you preach summoned us to 'get from under that juniper tree' and certainly we rose up, put our hands to the plow and have not looked back since that Sunday in June

1991. Your teaching, advising and coaching assisted in simplifying the theological underpinnings of this project. Thank you for the constant reminder and encouragement that with “God, all things are possible and that we can do all things through Him who strengthens us”.

Reverend Cassandra Marcus, who can ask for a better opportunity and fellowship when your co-pastor is your classmate and peer associate? Thank you for not only your warm embrace but also for your intellectual and spiritual prowess, knowledge, and candid opinions. During our studies, conversations and sharing, I pray that I was able to positively impact your life as well as we embarked on this journey together three years ago and now our dreams are coming to fruition.

A special heartfelt gratitude is extended to my mentor, Reverend Dr. Keith D. D. Lawrence for your embrace and friendship that also span over twenty-four years. You have always provided immense encouragement, recommendations, support, a listening ear, and suggestions since our paths crossed at Turner Chapel in 1991. The journey at United Theological Seminary is largely credited to you.

To Dr. Donnell J. Moore, senior mentor, thank you for your advice, recommendations and suggestions in ensuring that this work reflects the excellence God requires of us. You provided a listening ear even when the time and place would somehow inconvenience you. Dr. Felicia Laboy, faculty consultant, your scholarly and critical review of all the documents caused us to be mindful that inasmuch as this work is spiritual; it should also reflect a scholarly disposition. Heartfelt gratitude is also extended to Mrs. Tobeyette Wheeler-Jackson, who provided much needed edits to most of the

documents, Kim Sackey for your research methodology skills and Terra White and Felicia Lyles for your compiling and arranging skills.

Deep appreciation is extended to the family of Turner Chapel AME Church for the reflection of your abiding faith in God. I thank God for you for it was at this context that the writer conceived this project. A special note of gratitude goes to context associates, Rozetta Gray, Edwina Graham, Denice VanDorn, Little Brown, Felecia Lyles, Henry Pash, Lee Waller, Kim Sackey, Charlotte McGee, Chandria Brown, Evelyn Neely and Harriet Yancy for your willingness to assist with this project, your attention to details, the countless after hours and selfless commitment in finalizing this product. As I mentioned during our first meeting, Harriet and I have known most of you since our sojourn at Turner and we know that you have demonstrated over and over again that you love God and His people. Secondly, most of you have always deposited something positive in our spirits as we worshiped, served, and raised our children in the light of God. The Lord also blessed with an excited Focus Group who demonstrated also that their first priority is to serve God and humanity; however, they are advocating that the necessary direction, communication and equipping be provided and they are besieging the leadership to remove the barriers and challenges from their paths.

A tremendous gratitude is extended Dr. Angela Washington, Dr. David B. Rhone, Jr. and Dr. Tar-U-Way Bright, the professional associates for this project. I appreciate the careful reading, critiques, suggestions, and insights that you provided.

To my illustrious peer group, I thank God for your “vivid conversations.” Your insights, scholarly assessments, and theological interpretations provided clarifications on the various theories and subjects that we discussed. Certainly, “iron does sharpen iron.”

A word of appreciation is extended to President Wendy Deichmann, Dr. Harold Hudson and the entire staff of the United Theological Seminary for operating a first rate spiritual and academic institution and providing the avenue for us to ‘study to show ourselves approved’ for the work of the kingdom.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this academic enterprise to the memory of my late mother, Hannah Zipporah Pratt, who through her untold sacrifices provided for her seven children and made it possible for them to attain high quality education. As a kindergarten schoolteacher for most of her adult life, teaching her children to read, understand, and think was no lighthearted endeavor in our household. As she taught, she scolded and utilized whatever disciplinary techniques necessary to ensure that besides 'seeking you first the kingdom of heaven,' the pursuit of education was a very close second on her list of priorities. Even our father, the late Seaborn Nathaniel Yancy after observing how disciplined we had become to studying, reading and excelling in school uttered these words "One thing I admired and appreciate about Hannah, she taught and showed you the schoolhouse door."

Mama, I can only imagine how wide your smile is as your second child attains his Doctorate degree. Even though you are not physically here with us, I know you are rejoicing with the angels on this occasion. I will forever savor the grin of delight and confirmation that I saw on your face when I graduated from college in 1977. I hope this proves that we continue to "aim high."

The Doctor of Ministry project is also dedicated to Harriet Dorinda Yancy, a loving and committed wife who has stood beside me for every step of the journey for almost four decades supporting, prompting, and encouraging me.

INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to explore the reasons most members of the various churches, including my context, Turner Chapel AME Church are not actively involved in the church's ministries. The goal is to suggest a ministry model that will assist my context and congregations of any size in engaging the majority of its members into becoming active participants in the life of the church's ministries. In the Book, *The Other 80 Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants*, Scott Thumma and Warren Bird note that most of the roughly three hundred thousand Protestant churches in America encounter and bemoan this dilemma where only a small percentage of those in regular attendance is active and engaged in mission and ministry. The unresolved challenge remains in understanding how to motivate the "other 80 percent" into greater participation.¹

A keen observation has been made that the majority of the laity in the church sits on what is called the 'periphery.' In large congregations such as the context under review, this group of members may not be as conspicuous as in small congregations. In these large congregations, it is easy to proceed with the church's programs and worship services simply because there are quite a few who have 'put their hands to the plow.' However, this active population pales in numerical strength to those who have not moved from the baptismal font toward a life of discipleship and living out their faith. Research

¹ Scott Thumma and Warren Bird, *The Other 80 Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), xvi.

indicates that less than 50% of regular church attenders are active members. While participation percentages may vary from church to church, the core challenge does not.”²

Another keen observation that prompted this project is although this ministry context Turner Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church is a large congregation in size and membership; it remains culturally a small ministry in many respects. The church’s activities will quickly reveal that of the approximately 6,000 members, only a small fraction is consistently involved in the church’s activities, meetings, and programs. At Sunday worship services, approximately, 2000 worshippers attend the services while other Christian celebrations such as Good Friday, Ash Wednesday, and Foot Washing services are usually poorly attended. Of the more than 2,000 men who claim membership in this context, the headcount at men’s monthly prayer breakfasts on the first Saturday of each month averages approximately 100.

Furthermore, the same members almost always attend the decision-making meetings of the church. This situation has basically created a bond among a small group of long time active members who dominate the affairs of the church. The new or inactive member may find penetrating this close-knit group, intimidating in many ways. This is one of the potential pitfalls large churches must face in navigating its way through the constant challenges of making the new comers feel welcome and involving the less active members in the affairs of the church.

Tremendous amount of literature and models are available that can assist congregations as they pursue, harness and transform the reservoir of talents and gifts in their congregations into productive spiritual resources; however, each context must

² Thumma and Bird, *“The Other 80 Percent,”* xiii.

carefully evaluate the cardinal reasons that are hampering their ministries and provide solutions that create the atmosphere in which everyone feels welcome to serve. Neither churches nor books addressing this situation can offer a one-size-fits-all solution to the problem of marginal participation. Research shows that the greater the percentage of engaged members, the more likely the church will be vital, thriving, and spiritually healthy.³

A need truly exists to involve the inactive or disengaged church members into becoming true disciple of Jesus Christ. The process may be laden with some daunting challenges; however, Christians should and do care about that large percentage of members on the church's roll despite the feeling that some members are just along for the ride. This is not just an issue for the clergy alone to resolve. Every bona fide Christian or church member should be concerned about what will engender or encourage that large percentage into 'putting their hands to the plow.' Whether the inactive number is 90% or 80%, it does not matter. Cardinal to this issue is that a high percentage of inactive members places an undue burden on the clergy and hinders the progress of the Great Commission.

Ephesians 4:11-13 states, "The gifts He gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith."⁴ Both clergy and laity must realize that the Almighty God has bestowed us with separate and distinct gifts that should be utilized for the mutual benefit of His church

³ Thumma and Bird, *"The Other 80 Percent,"* 1.

⁴ Ephesians 4:11-13, New Revised Standard Version. Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references in this document are from the NSRV.

and His people.⁵ As one AME preacher put it, “God has ordained his own Divine Staffing Plan.”

For this ministry context, Turner Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the problem is the misunderstanding of our Christian calling as evidenced by the sheer inertia or inactivity of a large segment on the church’s membership roll. The objective of this project is to develop or adapt a model that will create involvement of the majority of the membership into the various ministries of the church. This project will also develop a membership model for the church to be more effective in tapping into the potential of all its members and equipping them for effective service in the church. This will enable the members to feel empowered and they will contribute meaningfully to the ministry. When this vast pool of inactive members are incorporated and empowered, the church will become more effective in addressing the challenges to the ministry, serving the surrounding communities, and fulfilling both the mission of Christ and the church.

Hollis Green posits that “the church has two major emphases: evangelism and education.”⁶ Inference can also be made that providing the avenue for training, equipping, effective recruitment and utilization of laity, is what distinguishes a growing and thriving ministry from struggling, docile and eventually defunct ministries. Churches cannot afford to ignore the ‘other 80%.’ If the laity makes up 99.5% of

⁵ Richard D. Hogan, *The Equipping Ministry: A Venture in the New Testament Ministry*, (Bethlehem, PA: Drew University, 1983), 58.

⁶ Hollis Green, *Why Churches Die- A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 65.

Christians according to Bliss and only approximately 20% is involved in ministries, it beckons a reconsideration of its major objectives.⁷

Scholars Thumma and Bird declared, “While ministries seem anxious to attract new members, their mission fields may be right in their respective ministries. The greatest American mission fields may already be members of Christian churches. This is not to suggest that we relent in fulfilling the Great Commission. Do not give up on reaching new folks, but turn serious attention to those who call your church home.”⁸ Therefore, churches must assess from time to time the reasons most of the 99.5% is not available for training and active involvement in the life of the church and address the obstacles and impediments to their ministries and churches.

Chapter one introduces the reader to my background and spiritual journey. It also sheds light on how my spiritual journey intersects with my context, Turner Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The suggestion for ‘Majority Participation’ is evidenced as at an early age it was perceived that a community could reap tremendous advantages when the majority is included and can freely participate in the affairs of the community. This chapter also discusses and analyzes the context and provides some insight on the growth and evolution of the ministry that created this project.

In chapter two, the biblical foundations on which the project is grounded is explored and fully expounded. Chapters three and four establish and reflect on the historical and theological aspects of the study. In these chapters, the lessons of history and theology are applied to underscore division of labor as ordained by God. They also

⁷ Kathleen Bliss, *We the People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 76.

⁸ Thumma and Bird, “*The Other 80 Percent*,” xxx.

provide the concepts that support active spiritual lay involvement. In chapter five, a thorough exploration of the literature that undergirds this project was undertaken. Under the nomenclature, theoretical foundations, some of the theories, models, and applications for equipping and/or training the laity to embrace their God given calling and assume their rightful roles were emphasized.

Chapter six of this document provides a format for the methodology of the project and defines a structure for the research methodology. This chapter documents and shares how the context associates arrived at the applicable research methodology that was utilized to facilitate the project at Turner Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. It also discusses the field experience and documents the activities that informed that study. It describes in detail the steps that were taken during the field experience to ensure reliable results were attained. This chapter further investigates and presents the results of the ministry project. It includes the data collection methods and analyzes the data to arrive at specific core issues that should be addressed in soliciting the active participation of the majority in the church.

Finally, it presents reflections, summation, and conclusion. Discussions on what could have been executed differently are outlined. Some new insights and possible solutions to the problem of inertia or inactivity of the majority of God's people are provided. It also highlights the recommendations and suggestions that the context and other ministries can utilize to equip and involve the majority in support of the ministry. It predicts what our churches and ministries would look like if most of its members 'put our hands to the gospel plow.' It challenges us to a counterintuitive argument of Jesus' parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:1-7) as the inactive laity could be described as the lost

sheep; however the situation in today's churches is that '80%' and not 1% is the issue. If the shepherd in the parable sought to rescue just one percent of his flock, imagine what our ministries would look like if 99% of the flock were fully engaged- in hearts, minds, souls, and strength?⁹ The 'Pareto Principle' should not be the norm in the church. The Pareto Principle as promulgated by the Italian Economist Alfred Pareto observed that the "majority of results come from a minority of efforts... and in the church world a handful of members typically perform most of the duties for the congregation."¹⁰

⁹ Thumma and Bird, "*The Other 80 Percent*," xx.

¹⁰ Thumma and Bird, "*The Other 80 Percent*," xxi.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The story began in Liberia, West Africa, which is located approximately five thousand miles from the eastern United States. Both parents were devout Christians. My mother, Hannah Z. Pratt was a life-long Episcopalian while my father Seaborn N. Yancy was a life-long Methodist. Therefore, depending on whom we lived with at the time, we were either Episcopalian or Methodist. Both were very active in their churches, as they had descended from priests and pastors. My mother is a descendant of Father Joshua S. L. Pratt, former Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Monrovia, Liberia and historical accounts note that my great grandfather, Allen Yancy, a freed man who was born and raised in Augusta, Georgia, was a Minister in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church. He relocated his family to Liberia and they settled in Harper, Maryland County, Liberia. He established Mount Ashton AME church, the first AME church in that part of the country and became the first Pastor of the church.

Because of their active involvement in the church, we attended church services regularly and became involved in church activities such as serving in the acolyte, singing in the choir, providing leadership in the Youth Fellowship, participating in the Boys Scouts and attending other major church and religious activities. My mother wielded the model and expectations for her children. She led the family in religious activities and imparted strict rules of discipline on her children. In addition to her seven biological

children, she adopted several other children including children of relatives and friends in the community.

She impressed upon us her values of faith in God, academic excellence, honesty, and strong work ethics. Introduction to Jesus Christ can be traced to the words from her lips as she admonished us as youngsters about settling disputes through peaceful means. Hustling over perhaps a toy or ball, she uttered these words: "...Let dogs delight to bark and bite for God has made them so. Let lion and deer growl and fight for such is their nature too. Little children's hands should never be allowed to tear each other's eyes. Live like that blessed mother's son, that sweet and lovely child..."

Those words left an indelible impression and raised several questions. Firstly, who was the blessed mother's son? She had to explain that Jesus Christ was the blessed mother's son whom God had sent through Mary, the blessed immaculate mother. Secondly, that Jesus was sent from heaven by God to redeem humankind from sin and that while on earth, that blessed Son did not harm anybody with fists or words. Thirdly, that if the Lord is emulated, humankind will learn to treat each other with love and respect and Jesus will take us home to live in heaven at the end of our lives.

My mother drove home a few lessons on that day especially what is considered the Golden Rule; "Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you." Secondly, Jesus' examples of love, peace and kindness should be followed and thirdly, that this world was not the final destination. In essence, we were introduced to the saving and redemptive power of Jesus Christ. My mother did not only attend church services regularly but actually practiced what is considered the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as kindness, gentleness, being a mother to all children in our neighborhood and a

willingness and readiness to give her last penny to anybody who was in need. As we grew up, my siblings and I would question our mother about the logic and rationale of hosting so many family members given such limited space for her and seven children. She would retort with some scriptural references such as “I was hungry and you fed me not or I was homeless and you took me not in.”

In addition to working tirelessly in the church and community and volunteering her time to the Food Share and Clothing Ministries, she was also an active member of the neighborhood Prayer Band- a group of women in the neighborhood who had prayer vigils every Wednesday evening and Tarries every first Friday of the month. They also fasted regularly for the wellbeing of the community. The tarries were nightlong experiences of praying and fasting. These prayer meetings and tarries were held in the homes of the members on a rotating basis. Therefore, when her turn came to host the meetings and tarries, we had to be present and participate, whether we, her children liked it or not. It was at one of those tarries that I truly accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Professionally, my mother worked as a kindergarten schoolteacher on a fulltime basis and as a seamstress on a part time basis for almost forty years. She was our first teacher both at home and in our early school years. Imagine having to deal with your own mother both at home and school; however, she imparted the attributes of proper deliverance of the English language, standing erect, walking with your head lifted up, looking folks in the eyes when speaking to them and defending your stance if you really believe it. My father worked for several years in government service as Commissioner for several districts throughout the country and as Commissioner of Customs. He finally retired in Greenville, Liberia and ran a small lumber business. As a youngster, I assisted

him in running the business. It was expected that a few responsibilities were put on my shoulders at an early age and that I lead by example being the second eldest child.

Because he was an accountant, he taught the principles of business and accounting to his children.

From an early age, mother's expectations were very clear and understood by her children. There was no second-guessing whether we attended church services and went to Sunday school every Sunday and that we excel academically. Each Sunday morning, the family gathered together in the parlor for Sunday morning prayers before we went to church. At those Sunday morning prayers, we sang a familiar hymn, took turns to read the scriptures, and as Episcopalians, were required to learn the Collect or designated Bible verse for that Sunday. She made the sacrifice to send her children to the private prestigious Catholic Schools where along with the rigorous academic discipline, religious studies, and rites were enforced. The Catholic school authorities did not care whether or not one belonged to another denomination, they drove home their Catholic discipline and instructions to all students. The students were required to attend Mass frequently and on various occasions, to honor the Virgin Mother and other Saints. These were unique experiences dealing with the confluence of three dominant denominations at an early age, as parents were Methodist and Episcopalian while attending Catholic schools.

Because of the emerging rancor in Liberia in the 1970's, the desire to unite the people of Liberia was perceived while attending the University of Liberia in the mid 1970's. I envisaged that I would later dedicate myself to ensuring that a bridge of reconciliation, understanding, and peace was fostered among the various tribes and segments of the population. Although Liberia is a small country, it has more than sixteen

major tribes and several political subdivisions called counties. A chasm or apathy existed among the people, tribes, and counties particularly between the ruling establishment and the rest of the population due to the lack of what could be described as the 'Golden Rule.' Apparently, the ruling establishment did not consider the wishes and feelings of those whom they governed. Apathy and disunity were the order of the day. This chasm seemed to permeate every fabric of the society to the point where depending on where one stood politically, economically or socially, one was either very oblivious or very cognizant of the reality.

The disunity would later manifest itself in the form of several political uprisings, a military coup and subsequently a brutal and vicious civil war that claimed the lives and displaced several hundred thousands of people. Although as a young lad, I was exposed to banking principles, practices, and simple bookkeeping by assisting my late father with his small lumber business, I was more interested in pursuing a career in law and politics as they fascinated me. Incidentally, it seemed to me at the time, that lawyers and politicians were the people who made the major decisions and who could provide the atmosphere for unification that was lacking among the people, and if not addressed, could destroy the country.

My intention after graduating from college was to work for two years and acquire some professional experience before proceeding to law school. While serving as the Vice President of the Senior Class, the class organized a Career Day Forum. The Career Day Forum brought experts from all the major professions in the community to the campus of the University of Liberia to share the advantages of pursuing careers in their respective fields. As we sat through the session on banking and finance, I was fascinated by the

deliverance, diction, and charisma of the Operations Manager of the largest commercial bank in the country.

The bank executive shared with the students the importance of banking and elevated it to the level of the major professions such as medicine and law. In fact, he opined that banking and finance was even more important than law and second only to medicine. He convincingly stated that everyone needs a doctor, a banker, and a minister if one is spiritual. He further mentioned that one might not ever need a lawyer during one's life. Nonetheless, doctors are necessary as long as one lives and bankers are important as long as one earns, spends, saves, invests, and borrows money. After the session, I requested a meeting with the bank executive and he consented. The meeting led to my accepting a position as Management/Executive Trainee of the banking institution. Although I was thrilled by the offer, I thought to myself that I would use this opportunity to learn about the world of banking and finance, then proceed to studying law, and eventually become a leading politician in the country.

After graduating from college, my childhood sweetheart, Harriet Dorinda Williams and I married on June 7, 1981. We met each other when we were quite young as both of us lived in the same neighborhood and attended some of the weekly prayer meetings. We are parents of Roland Evans, Jr. and Rodney and grandparents to Ethan, Sophia, Jasmine, and Cameron. To God be the Glory! By divine hands, the Lord placed a Christian lady in my life, as she has been one of the persons that ensured that I did not drift too far from my anchor. As did my mother, her mother also belonged to the local Prayer Band. Therefore, she had been raised in a Christian household and had accepted

the Lord at an early age. As she was active in church related activities, it propelled me to the fold after drifting away as an adolescent.

When I started law school in 1982, I was offered two successive scholarships. The first scholarship brought me to the United States to study Credit Risk Analysis at the First National Bank of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois and the second scholarship offered graduate studies in banking and finance at Roosevelt University also in Chicago, Illinois. Later on, I would again be offered a fellowship to pursue further studies in financial management at Boston University, Boston Massachusetts. It was the providence of the Almighty God through the granting of this fellowship that rescued my family and me from one of Africa's most brutal civil wars. Four months after my family and I departed the country, a civil war commenced that claimed the lives of approximately one-fourth of the Liberian population and displaced another one-fourth throughout the Diaspora.

As noted, early travels to the U.S. for vacations and subsequently to attend universities and training programs were to the Midwest and Northeast. Neither Marietta nor Atlanta, Georgia was on the horizon except for its fame as the birthplace of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the bedrock of the civil rights struggle in the United States. As my spiritual autobiography synergizes with my context, I often wonder whether the Lord diverted my path from pursuing politics and law to pursuing banking and finance so that my education and training could be utilized for his edification. Due to eruption of civil hostilities in my home country, Liberia, my family and I relocated to Marietta, Georgia after completion of graduate studies in financial management at Boston University in Boston, Massachusetts. By divine providence, we became members of Turner Chapel AME Church, Marietta, Georgia at a time when the church was in a

growth mode and where my earlier thoughts of bridge building would be nurtured.

During that period, the entire metropolitan area of Atlanta was experiencing phenomenal population growth as major corporations relocated or expanded their operations in the area. This trend attracted professionals with young families to the area. Because the area has experienced phenomenal population growth in the last thirty years, Cobb County, Georgia being one of the largest counties in the metro area of Atlanta, has benefitted from the growth. Turner Chapel, located in Marietta, Georgia, also experienced remarkable growth especially with the arrival of the Reverends Kenneth and Cassandra Marcus in 1988.

Besides their career goals, some of these transplants like my family seemed restless and were on a quest to satisfy a curiosity for the divine or deity. This period in the church's history was filled with excitement and dynamism. My family had the unique opportunity to join this divine experience in 1991, as it was just taxing off the runway. At the time, the edifice located on 548 Lawrence Street, which could comfortably host about 200 persons, began bursting at the seams, basically due to the influx of new members from other parts of the country.

The potential new members were attracted and motivated to join Turner for some of the following reasons:

- The pastors were young and energetic
- The worship services were upbeat and uplifting
- The preached word was phenomenal and transforming
- The voices of the choirs were melodious and inspiring
- The church provided a youth and children's ministry

- The Sunday school and Bible study classes provided a learning environment.

From a roster of approximately 200 members, the membership of Turner Chapel increased to approximately 1,000 in a few years. As the church grew and the sanctuary on Lawrence Street could no longer accommodate the worshippers on Sunday mornings, the church began to host three Sunday services at 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m., and 11:00 a.m. Eventually, the three services began to overflow and the leadership made the decision to request the use of the auditoriums and gymnasiums of high schools in the community. After a brief period, they too became inadequate to host the growing numbers of worshippers on any given Sunday. This also brought other challenges such as parking and vehicles ingress and egress to the various services.

It became apparent that Pastor Marcus was excited about these newly converted or returning souls to the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. As the church went through that transitional period, it required dedicated and capable hands to assist the pastor in navigating through this period and finding solutions to the myriad of challenges brought on by this influx of new members. Pastor Marcus wasted no time in soliciting the assistance of this fairly well educated and professional group of individuals. These new members offered their talents and professional experiences to tackle any issue at hand. The leadership of the church also seemed to welcome the contributions of these new members.

In 1993, Pastor Marcus and the church officers, agreed upon a vision for Turner Chapel that included a new church campus with a sanctuary, educational facility, multi-purpose center, childcare facilities and an activity center. Subsequently, in October of 1994, a Church Expansion Committee was formed to address the immediate and long-

term needs during each of the three services, held at 7:00 a.m., 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. and for a worship space.¹ As the church membership comprised spiritual laypersons and professionals from all walks of life, the Expansion Committee was composed of preachers, strategists, planners, engineers, administrators, and financial managers etc. With the help of the Almighty God, the members of the Expansion Committee brought their skills to the table to solve this major space and displacement problem of the church.

This situation is rather analogous to Jesus' selection of the apostles to assist in the mission of converting the world. Jesus knew that to spread his message and undergird the work, the assistance of certain individuals for the execution of the task would be needed. Therefore, the Lord chose twelve young men from the various professions of the day and shared the mission and vision with them. They may not have been very religious people; however, the Lord knew that they were professionals in their own right and had proven that they could execute their tasks. Justo L. Gonzalez in his bestselling book, *The Story of Christianity*, volume 1 declared, "There are episodes in the course of the history of the church in which it is difficult to see the action of the Holy Spirit... At some points in our narrative, it may do well to remember two things. The first of these is that, while this narrative is the history of the deeds of the Spirit, it is the history of those deeds through sinners such as we are. Secondly, it has been through those sinners and that church—and only through them that the biblical message has come to us."²

¹ The Cathedral of Turner Chapel AME Church, Dedication Journal, June 2005.

² Gonzalez, Justo L., *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress 2010), 2.

Jesus transformed the profession of the celebrated fishermen brothers, Andrew and Peter, from catchers of fish to fishers of men. (Mt 4:19). He transformed Matthew's tax collecting skills to collecting the redeemed for Christ (Mt 9:9). It was the same spirit that existed at Turner Chapel during that growth period—the utilization by the Holy Spirit of one's technical, managerial and problem solving skills for addressing the challenges in the ministry such as space, strategic and event planning, budgeting, finance, building etc. with the ultimate goal of evangelization—winning souls for Christ.

With a background in banking and finance and by the grace of the Almighty, Pastor Marcus appointed me to the Building Expansion Committee where I served as the Finance Sub-Committee Chairman. In this role, the committee would discuss the various financing options available to the church, meet with bankers, prepare loan applications and review proposals from banks and finance companies. At first, this process seemed mundane and ordinary to me, as this was the kind of work that I had done for most of my life. However, on the day that we had to present a counter proposal to one of the major banks in the U.S., it finally dawned on me that since I was a young lad, I was exposed to the banking world.

Here I was at the meeting with the bank, not sitting on the side with the bankers trying to get a good return for my employer and eventually a fat bonus for myself, but on the side with God's servants letting the bankers know that we understand the terms of their proposal. Nonetheless, we were there to counter their offer, as we were aware of the prevailing rates and fees in the marketplace. As I currently contemplate certain aspects of my life through spiritual lenses, I thought to myself, was this the primary reason for my

exposure to the world of finance at an early age and subsequently my education and experience in banking and finance? After all is said and done, the concern of all Christians I surmise would be that 'we are all on God's side.'

There are other characteristics of the ministry that forges a synergy between my life's experiences and the context. Upon my joining the ministry of Turner Chapel, I also discovered that the environment is also very supportive in fostering the skill that I had acquired as a teacher and the quiet style of evangelizing that I have practiced both in college and in the church. Associating with the New Members Ministry provides the opportunity to facilitate the class on The History of the AME Church and utilizes both the teaching experience and the quiet evangelizing skills acquired over the years. It also compelled me to embark on research on the origin of the Christian church.

Another unique situation in my context that synergizes with my spiritual autobiography is the fact that Turner Chapel, with its unique upbeat style of worship, often referred to as "AME Pentecostal," has attracted members from almost all denominations. It has even attracted those who had not been part of any denomination. With my background which entails the confluence of several denominations, I can easily relate to members who are either grappling with Turner's unique style of worship or who have come through many dangers, toils and snares and are inclined to exuberantly worship the Lord without the strictures of liturgy or church dogma. I can easily share with them that I too have spent a considerable part of my life in the 'silk stocking' or conservative mode of worship. However, worshiping and praising the Lord with outbursts of joy and

praise are not only welcomed at Turner but are highly encouraged, for it was grace that has brought some of us thus far and grace will lead us all home.

Turner Chapel has also attracted quite a large block of members like my family from the Diaspora. I think it is primarily because the Senior Pastor himself is from Trinidad. However, Turner's vision of making a difference in people lives by extending the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ extends throughout the Diaspora as missionaries make visits to countries in the Caribbean to work with other churches and provide assistance to suffering humanity. On two occasions, representatives of the youth ministry visited Trinidad and the Dominican Republic to share the gospel with other young people, spend time with the elderly in nursing homes, and paint local churches. The Missionary Society makes frequent visits to the Caribbean to work with other missionaries in sharing the gospel and assisting the needed. Also, Pastor Marcus and other members have made several mission trips to Africa.

Whenever, the need arises to manifest generosity, the members at Turner respond as in the case towards the victims of Hurricane Katrina or, to the requests for clothing from one of our former members who currently live in Africa. In the case of the victims of Katrina, as prayers and requests were lifted up the Sunday after the disaster, members generously responded with donations of clothing and cash until the gymnasium of our Recreational Center was filled. Pertaining to the annual requests for clothing and other needs for some of our less fortunate brethren in Africa, the needs are often met with great enthusiasm from the membership. These aspects of the church's ministries appeal greatly to those of us from the Diaspora.

It should be noted that even in the church being foreign born has its challenges. I

am sometimes pointedly asked by some brothers and sisters, what led me to Turner and more importantly how I arrived at the point of being appointed on the Steward Board, or to some other sensitive committees. From those who are not bold enough to inquire, sometimes their facial expressions and body language reveal their thoughts. I can infer from their tone and the body language that I may be taking the place of one who was born in the U.S. On a number of occasions when it appeared to me that I was being dismissed or ignored, I have had to assert myself firmly that I am a child of the Almighty God and that I have all the rights and privileges by the grace of God to be in the Lord's presence and to articulate my thoughts on the issue at hand.

Furthermore, in God's eyes, there is no East or West or North or South. We are all one and that our primary concern is to become citizens of the Lord's Kingdom in Heaven and not be interested in earthly citizenship for all earthly kingdoms will pass away. On other occasions, I am inclined to share with them that because of the grace and providence of Almighty God, I have a testimony that is worth sharing to encourage others. This testimony entails situations involving some pain, hurt and near death situations such as the grenade that exploded beside our car, the rescue and deliverance from fourteen years of civil conflict, the pain of abandonment or brokenness and because of the foregoing experiences, I feel that I have developed immense sensitivity and sensibilities to aid in finding solutions to the challenges that concern our basic humanity and spread the Christian message of love for our fellow men and women.

My context, Turner Chapel AME Church, is blessed with a large number of laypeople that are involved in several ministries that are evangelistic in nature. Turner, through its lay members, partners with the community by its involvement in programs

such as Harmony House, the Young Family Resource Center, and the Education Committee. The Harmony House Program is the prison ministry. Members are concerned that there are many brothers and sisters in prison with whom the word of God needs to be shared, so that they might come into the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. Through this ministry, the county collaborates with the church in assisting released convicts transition from inmates to productive and God fearing citizens. The Young Family Resource Center assists teen-aged mothers with their children by providing childcare services during the day so that they may complete their high school education. Without stating much, this ministry demonstrates to young women that they can depend on the church and the Lord during difficult times in their lives. The Education Committee encourages the students at Turner to achieve not only academic excellence but to also depend on the Lord as they pursue their studies and eventually their careers. In essence, these ministries of primarily lay members serve as evangelistic tools for the furtherance of God's kingdom.

The coordination of the aforementioned activities is mostly untaken by laypersons. They may not be as spiritual as the people of the cloth; however, they bring to the execution of the tasks firstly their love for God and God's people and secondly, the blessings of their managerial and technical expertise. In spite of the foregoing and as the church grows numerically, the percentage of dedicated members appears to decline. The enthusiastic fervor that the majority of members exuded twenty years ago that capitulated the church from a small unknown congregation to the second largest AME church in Georgia seems to be fading due to inertia and nonparticipation of the majority.

This project seeks to find out whether apathy or disunity has entered the church and to recommend solutions to the problem. The problem or project statement is the

utilization of the majority in the congregation to tackle the current challenges of the church or more specifically to grow the local church. Firstly, the pastor or leader of the ministry must have a vision and must embrace the reservoir of talent available in the ministry and utilize them in several capacities to transform the vision to reality. As one looks at various stagnant ministries, it is evident that ‘without vision, the people do perish.’ To spread the word, develop disciples, and grow the local church, it requires a well-articulated vision from the pulpit. The words “write the vision, make it plain” cannot be understated in this context.

Furthermore, pastors and church leaders alike must be willing to accept that growth brings challenges and change. However, challenges generate innovation and creativity. In order to grow, some of the old ways of doing things such as the order of worship and the way decisions are made must be modified. Growth necessitates the inclusion of all God’s people regardless of origin, ethnicity and length of membership in the ministry. Some of the challenges and struggles that have impacted my life have caused me to bring a rare sense of sensitivity to my roles and activities as a leader and the desire to involve the majority in this context into the fabric of the church family. There is no room for apathy or inertia in the House of God. Equally, there is no need for minority rule or participation while the majority is ignored or sidelined.

As Turner charts a new direction for the future in fulfilling its mission and vision, it will more fully require the comprehension of the vision of the pastor and the active participation of the leaders and members at large in view of the continued challenges posed by the growth in membership and the upkeep of the new sanctuary.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Lay leadership has always been a part of God's plan for the church. This chapter will explore both Old and New Testament foundations that support this argument. A close observation of many churches and ministries confirms the assertion that truly "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Mt 9: 37-38). These words were uttered as our Lord and Savior traveled around the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing diseases and sicknesses. As more people came to hear the Word, verse 36 illustrates, our Lord had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

As in our churches and ministries today, there is a growing need for committed and spiritual lay leadership to assist the leader/pastor in shepherding the crowd that is hungry for the Word or that needs to be delivered from sin. One can conclude that our Lord was saddened by the lack of sufficient and spiritually capable people who were equipped enough to assist in this mission of deliverance and salvation. The quick choosing of the twelve implies that the Lord needed to spiritually equip a few dedicated and committed persons in shouldering the divine and salvific purpose; however, the magnitude of the mission needed more and more capable hands from the rank and file of

the crowd in accomplishing the mission.

In Exodus 18, Jethro's advice to Moses as he unilaterally handled all the matters of the people, underscores the importance of delegating the administrative or mundane tasks to others who are committed to the mission or purpose of the ministry. His failure to equip some capable people to handle the daily tasks while he concentrates on the larger mission of deliverance of the Israelites to the Promised Land, serves as evidence that pastors or the clergy needs the assistance of a capable, dedicated and spiritually equipped laity.

In the New Testament book of Acts 6, we again encounter the situation where the Apostles were becoming engulfed in the mundane task of administering food to the widows instead of spending their time with the more salient tasks of preaching the gospel and winning souls for the kingdom. In both situations, it was realized that the assistance of the laity was necessary in order for the pastor/shepherd to concentrate on the spiritual matters of the congregations. The awesome, life changing and ultimate task of winning souls for Christ, was never intended to be placed entirely on the shoulders of the pastor or the clergy; however, it is expedient that the pastor/clergy realizes that sharing the burden of discipleship is paramount in fulfilling the Great Commission. With this backdrop, this paper purports to fully expound on the topic: *Called To Serve: Equipping Lay Members For Active Participation in The Church And Sharing The Responsibilities For Church Leadership*.

On the one hand, it is incumbent upon the pastor to share his vision for the ministry and provide the spiritual nurturing for the laity so that they can assist in administering the affairs of the church or ministry. As Lovett H. Weems, Jr. stated in his

book, *Church Leadership*, “Discern and articulate a shared vision.” He further described vision as “a dream, a picture of what is possible. Perhaps the best way to think of it is a picture of a preferred future.” “Rosabeth Moss Kanter believes that such a picture must be in place before people can let go of the past and permit change to take place. As Aristotle put it, “The soul never thinks without a picture.”¹ Habakkuk 2:2 states “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that they may run who read it.” The vision has to be clearly articulated by the pastor and understood by the congregation. For God’s mission to be accomplished, it needs both the spiritual leader (Pastor/Shepherd) and the laity (congregation) collaboratively working together. The collaboration of the pastor and the leadership in addressing the needs of the congregation buttresses Ammerman’s assertion that from the time the congregation recognizes it has reached a turning point in its life through every step of its efforts to better understand itself, to the moment it makes an informed response to the congregation’s situation, both leaders and members need to see themselves as a team working together toward the future.²

On the other hand, the laity has to be willing to embrace the vision of the pastor, to follow his leadership and be available to be trained and/or equipped. “Give your pastor the permission to equip you for ministry by volunteering for service. Getting equipped means being trained and prepared for the ministry you select in your church.”³ “Church members must be willing to accept the biblical role of the pastor as equipper. They must

¹ Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Church Leadership, Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 21, 23.

² Nancy T. Ammerman et al., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 25.

³ Dan Reiland, *Shoulder To Shoulder: Strengthening Your Church By Supporting Your Pastor* (Peabody, MA: Library of Congress, 1997), 128.

be willing to avail themselves of his guidance in finding their gifts and places of service. Unfortunately, there are large numbers in our churches who do not avail themselves of the opportunities for growth and development. These unfortunate members are not a part of regular programs of Bible study, discipleship training, mission study, and other opportunities for growth. Some who attend come so sporadically that no serious learning or equipping can take place. Too many of the church membership see this area of growth and development as optional in their Christian lives. They have not learned that training in the Christian life is not optional.”⁴

Old Testament

Historical Background

It has always been God’s plan firstly, to deliver humankind from sin and damnation. Once the Lord entered into the covenant with Abraham in the Book of Genesis, chapter 15, one can repeatedly see the divine and omnipotent hand of God providing for and delivering the children of Israel. The remarkable story of their sojourn in Egypt also in the Book of Genesis chapters 42-47, demonstrates how God raised Joseph to the level of Prime Minister in Egypt and through the promotion of Joseph; the children of Israel were rescued from the great famine. The story of Moses’ rescue as a child by the daughter of Pharaoh in Exodus 2 and to be raised in the home of the noble family in Egypt, further revealed God’s omnipotent hand in the deliverance of the

⁴ Findley B. Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity* (Houston, TX: Convention Press, 1985), 79.

children of Israel. Moses grew up and God used him as the Shepherd of the Israelites to lead and deliver them out of bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land.

Secondly, the Bible is replete with stories of God's continued deliverance of the children of Israel even as they repeatedly contravened the tenets in the covenant such as found in the Old Testament Books of Judges chapter 3, 1 Samuel 17 and 2 Kings 20. In the various narratives, God would punish them for a while and then forgive, delivered and rescued them. These deliverance stories would ultimately manifest themselves through the salvific deliverance from sin which became available through Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament books of Galatians, Colossians 1, Romans 4, etc. Even with the myriad of transgressions committed, God's compassion for them was so profound in that the Lord sent His only begotten son to redeem humankind. The deliverance motif is the underlying dominant theme in both situations in Exodus 18 and Acts 6.

The history of the children of Israel and subsequently the story of Christianity has always captivated my attention in a profound manner. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that God gave his only begotten child, so that everyone who believes in that child may not perish but have everlasting life." The Bible tells us that the children of Israel were chosen by God to be the people of God and although the Lord had provided for them and performed many miracles on their behalf, they continually went through the process of sin and redemption for several generations. Finally, God decided to become incarnate with humankind in order to rescue us from sin and damnation by sending Jesus, the Son of God, and Lamb of God. Psalm 8:4-6 states, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made

them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet.”⁵

Literary Content

God’s plan of deliverance and redemption is ultimately entwined with building or growing the kingdom by winning souls. “During the Lord’s ministry here on earth, Jesus gave us the plan for church growth in Matthew: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore *go and make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Mt 28:18-20).⁶ One can conclude, “God purposed and planned that His church grows both in membership and knowledge of Him. God intended from the very beginning for His church to grow.”⁷

“For the church to grow and for Christianity to flourish, both the pastor and laity have to come to the realization that the pastor cannot perform the roles of both spiritual leadership and daily administering of tasks that are in the purview and ability of the leadership. No matter how good and capable your pastor is, she/he cannot minister to all the needs of the people.”⁸ “If you do not participate in ministry, you are forcing someone else (or your pastor) to carry more than God intended. The other possibility is that the

⁵ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 466.

⁶ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 128-129.

⁷ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 129.

⁸ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 129.

specific ministry God intended will not get done.”⁹ God’s plan is for your pastor to equip you for ministry. The sign in front of your church could rightly say: Equipper: Reverend Herman U. Ticks. Ministers: The Whole Congregation.¹⁰

As the pastor has the crucial role of teaching and equipping the laity for service in the kingdom of God, the laity/congregation has to be available to assist the pastor. James L. Garlow posits in his book, *Partners in Ministry: Pastors and Laity Working Together*, “The concept of the ministry of all of God’s people is not limited to the New Testament as in Exodus 19, at Mount Sinai, God instructed Moses regarding the ministry of ancient Israel. In verse 6, God calls the children of Israel a kingdom of priests. He is not referring simply to those in the professional priesthood. He is saying that Israel as a nation—as a people—was called to service, was called to ministry.”¹¹ “They had what Thomas Gillespie has called mediating ministry; that is, standing between God and the world. All the Israelites were called to this important ministry. Israel’s problem was that they became confused about their call. They did not understand that they were called, not to status or to *honor* or position and *privilege*, but rather to *servanthood* or *ministry*. God’s original dream was that His people would function as a kingdom of priests standing between Him and a world needing to know about him.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us, “You will be called priests of the Lord, and you will be named ministers of our God” (61:6). The fulfillment of this ancient dream is

⁹ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 130.

¹⁰ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 128.

¹¹James L. Garlow, *Partners In Ministry: Laity and Pastors Working Together* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City 1981), 18.

occurring today in the Church. It is occurring now in us. We are all ministers.”¹² We discover the same truth in the last book of the Bible. John tells us that Christ “loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father (Rev 1:5-6). Oscar Feucht wrote, “It is unmistakably clear that the term Priest as used in the New Testament does not refer to officiants in a church building but describes all believers. James Reston, at a press conference at the Congress on the Laity in Los Angeles stated, “Religion is too serious a business to be left to the clergy. Someone has pointed out that Christianity is different from a football game. Football has been described as “twenty-two men on the field who desperately need rest and 16,000 people in the stands who desperately need exercise.” Contrary to popular opinion, *Christianity* is not a *spectator sport*. Every believer is a minister. Everyone is involved.”¹³

“Now you may be saying, I’m just a layperson. If so, Francis Ayers’ words may be for you: “You are a minister of Christ. If you are a baptized Christian, you are already a minister, whether you are ordained or not is immaterial. No matter how you react, the statement remains true. You may be surprised, alarmed, pleased, antagonized, acquiescent, scornful, or engaged. Nevertheless, you are a minister of Christ.”¹⁴ This lack of knowledge on the part of the laity on their calling to ministry has impacted the spread of the gospel message to the ends of the world. Most of the laity, including me (although my perception changed when I became an active member and subsequently a Steward at

¹² Garlow, *Partners In Ministry*, 19.

¹³ Garlow, *Partners In Ministry*, 19.

¹⁴ Garlow, *Partners In Ministry*, 21.

my context) has always thought the brunt of the work of ministry lay with the ordained clergy.

In enlightening us for the sharing of the ministry between the laity and the pastor, Paul says in Ephesians 4:11-13:

It was God who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, *to prepare God's people for works of service.*, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The above text demonstrates that it is evident that indeed, we all do not possess the same gifts; however, we all have a divine gift that that can be utilized for the advancement of the kingdom of God. The topic or theme mentioned supra, directs our attention to two narratives in the scriptures apparently where God's divine deliverance of his people, both spiritually and physically, was being hindered because the spiritual leader/leaders were becoming preoccupied with mundane church affairs; albeit important; however, they were neglecting the paramount duties of the mission and/or ministry. Beginning with the Old Testament passage, the intent is to examine and elaborate on the significance and impact of these two passages of the scriptures on equipping the laity to assist the pastor/leader in achieving the dictates of deliverance and the Great Commission

Close Reading/Analysis

In Exodus 18, Jethro, the priest of Midian and Moses' father-in-law, had heard all that the Lord had done for Moses and the children of Israel by bringing them out of the Egypt. Jethro went into the wilderness where Moses was encamped at the mountain of God bringing Moses' sons Gershom, Eliezer, and wife Zipporah to him. After the usual

methods of greetings characterized by bowing, kissing and asking about the other's wellbeing, Moses revealed to Jethro the wonders the Lord had performed for them by eviscerating the numerous obstacles and challenges and delivering them out of Egypt. In spite of the myriad of difficulties that they had encountered, the Lord had delivered them.

In the process, Jethro, the priest of Midian, acknowledges Israel's God as the Lord that is greater than all gods because God delivered the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians when they dealt arrogantly with them (v. 11). It appears from this acknowledgement that Israel had potentially gained a convert although John I. Lawlor in his *At-Sinai Narrative: Exodus 18-Numbers 10*, contends, "The assertion of a religious transformation of Jethro, based on the textual support cited is a case of overreaching."¹⁵ "Jethro's confession of 18:10-11, at best, reflects henotheism; it is not unlike what is credited to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:28-29) and to Darius (Dan 6:26-27)."¹⁶ Nonetheless, I would assert that when one openly confesses our Lord above all gods whether he/she is henotheistic or not, it becomes an opportunity to witness in an attempt to win that person to our faith.

As the leader of the flock, one can only imagine the tasks that Moses faced on a daily basis. He must have become so immersed in the mission and responsibility given to him by God of leading the children of Israel that he was beginning to neglect some other more important duties such as caring for his own family. Verse 2: says, "After Moses had

¹⁵ Lawlor, John I., "The At-Sinai Narrative: Exodus 18-Numbers 10" *Bulletin For Biblical Research* 21, (2011): 23-42. *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 25, 2014).

¹⁶ Lawlor, "The At-Sinai Narrative," 28.

sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro took her back along with their two sons.”

A close reading of the text reveals the dire situation in which Moses finds himself as he tries to be obedient to God and accomplish the mission of leading the children of Israel through the wilderness out of Egypt and then delivering them into the Promised Land. Firstly, he had neglected his family. He had taken them to live with their father and grandfather as he was so engrossed and perhaps overwhelmed with the task of leading some of the most rebellious people that we have ever encountered in the annals of human history—a whining, complaining, lustful, ungrateful and lascivious people. Exodus 4:18-20 reads:

Moses went back to his father-in-law Jethro and said to him, “Please let me go back to my kindred in Egypt and see whether they are still living.” And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace. The Lord said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt; for all those who were seeking your life are dead.’ So Moses took his wife and his two sons, put them on a donkey, and went back to the land of Egypt; and Moses carried the staff of God in his hand.

Secondly, it appears that Moses did not realize that he could not carry the burdens and responsibility alone. So engrossed with the mission, apparently, he did not articulate or earmark the vision for Israel’s deliverance clearly and succinctly to the people. On the other hand, perhaps he could not trust them with the sanctity of the mission and vision as we encountered in previous chapters. For example, in Exodus 16, instead of being grateful for what God had done in their lives, they started complaining and reminiscing about their not sitting by the fleshpots and eating their fill of bread and wishing they had died in Egypt than to be hungry in the wilderness. In Exodus chapter 17, they quarreled with Moses to give them water to drink and asked ‘why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst? From the preceding

statements, it appears that they preferred slavery in Egypt than freedom in the land that will flow with milk and honey as God had promised (Ex 3:17). We also see later in Exodus 32, when Moses left to commune with God on the mountain for a few days, they had become so despondent that they reverted to worshipping idols.

Whatever was going on in Moses' mind due to the numerous challenges that he faced, he had firstly neglected his family. That is a wilderness experience all by itself, for in the creation story in Genesis 2:18, God said that it is not good for a man to be alone. I will make him a helper as a partner. Being without his family, especially his wife while he attends to the mission of pastoring the people and attending to their needs must have left him feeling lonesome, sad, and sometimes despondent. It also potentially left him vulnerable to the wiles of the devil—a recipe for choking the deliverance plan and the message.

The second situation, which was rightly observed by his father-in-law Jethro, was that Moses was solely performing the role of judge of the people from morning until the evening even though there were many available people to assist him with the various tasks. Imagine the pastor of the church performing all the tasks in the church while potentially capable and available people are doing nothing. By involving himself with every matter whether significant or trivial, the more important task of providing spiritual leadership had been relegated to the bottom of the daily agenda. Jethro inquired in verse 14, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?” Moses' responds in verses 15-16, “Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come

to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes.”

While verse 15 seems to give a reasonable answer, verse 16 provided the opportunity for Jethro to advise him that it was virtually impossible for him to shoulder these responsibilities alone. Besides being Moses’ father-in-law, Lawlor asserts, “After Jethro has gone through a basic religious change from hearing the sacred deliverance story (vv. 7-8), responded favorably, confessed Yahweh above all Gods, presented sacrifice and praise to him and worshipped him with a representative group of Israel in the vicinity of the mountain of God, then he, as the father-in-law of Moses, has a privileged place in Israel’s history. He is now capable and qualified to offer the advice that he does in the second part.”¹⁷ In Verses 17-27, Jethro gave his advice and Moses listened:

Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able persons among all the people, persons who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such persons over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.” So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able persons from all Israel and appointed them as heads over the people, as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. And they judged the people at all times; hard cases they brought to Moses, but any minor case they decided themselves. Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went off to his own country.

¹⁷ Lawlor, “The At-Sinai Narrative,” 23-42.

A close reading of the text indicates that Moses had become overwhelmed with his unilateral approach in accomplishing the mission that God has entrusted to him. It had become virtually impossible for him to judge all the cases brought before him on a daily basis whether significant or trivial. He was really wearing himself out while subordinating the salient task of delivering God's people to the Promised Land. "Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, observed that Israel's leader was on the road to failure with his do-it-all style of leading (18:17-18). So, he proposes a threefold solution. First, intercede with prayer on behalf of the people (18:19). Second, teach the people God's statutes regarding their walk and work (18:19-20). Third, choose qualified leaders with whom to share the work load (18:21)."¹⁸

The text demonstrates that firstly, nothing surpasses prayer. The spiritual leader has to be committed to a prayer life and should undertake no project without firstly consulting God. James 1:5 states, "If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you." Psalm 63:1 echoes "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek you: my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land." A favorite hymn of the church reads, 'Just a little talk with Jesus makes it right.' Another one states, "Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear, just because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer." Moses' scrambling or juggling with the daily issues of the people from sun up to sundown while trying to concentrate on the greater mission of deliverance demonstrates that he had become troubled with no peace. It was really the time for him to consult God and intercede with

¹⁸ Mayhue, Richard L., "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," *Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 2: 213-224, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed April 25, 2014), 217.

prayer on behalf of the people so that God could provide him with some capable, spiritual and God fearing people. So encumbered with the mundane tasks of solving the people's problems, a close reading of the text indicates that Moses had missed an opportunity to fully convert Jethro to the faith and make him one of the armor bearers of the mission. Jethro had confessed that Israel's God was the God above all gods. "For one believes with the heart and so is justified and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved" (Rom 10:10).

The second advice is "Teach the people God's statutes regarding the walk and work."¹⁹ As illustrated in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." Ephesians 4 clearly states, "God imparted the gifts to us that some would become pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

Teaching implies that God's people will become efficient, effective, and productive in handling the tasks of ministry. It also indicates that God's people grow in knowing the Lord, maturing in the Word and understanding the purpose of their lives here on earth. Furthermore, that they become equipped to handle the tasks of ministry that the pastors/leaders could delegate to them in order for the pastor/leader to concentrate on the more spiritual matters. In that process, we all become part of the master's plan of deliverance and salvation of the world. Teaching strengthens the faith of

¹⁹ Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 217.

believers as Romans 10:17 outlines, “Faith comes by what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.” It also implies that the pastor/teacher cannot make assumptions about the people’s lack of faith or incompetence as Moses did. He has to make training opportunities available such as Bible study, Sunday school, etc., to the members so that they can hear the instructions from God.

As the text reveals, Moses was not teaching or training anyone to handle some of the tasks of leadership. Therefore, he was becoming tired, lonesome and overwhelmed which were leading to his failure to accomplish God’s plan of deliverance of the people to the Promised Land. The pastor has to teach/equip the laity in order for them to assist with the other tasks in the church so that he can concentrate on the spiritual matters of the church. In his description of the task of the pastor, Findley B. Edge in his book, *The Doctrine of Laity* inquired, “What is the role of the pastor? Let’s answer the question first of all by saying what he is not called to do. The pastor is not called to be the one primarily responsible for *doing* the ministry in the place of others. The designation of pastors connotes that he will guide in the work of the ministry. The pastor has a ministry just as every believer has a ministry. According to the scriptures, the pastor is to preach (Acts 15:32), to oversee (1 Tm 3:1), to shepherd (1 Pt 5:2-3), to evangelize (2 Tm 4:5), and to rule/preside (1 Tm 5:17). All of these designations point to one central task. The pastor is to help the believers grow into more mature Christians who will minister according to their calling.”²⁰

Edge further narrated that “The classical statement of the pastor’s task is found in Ephesians 4:11-12. There are three parallel clauses here that seemingly indicate the work

²⁰ Edge, *The doctrine of the Laity*, 77.

the pastor is to do-perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry, and edify the body of Christ. Thus, from a biblical perspective, the central task of the pastor is very clear. The pastor is to help those who are believers to grow and develop toward maturity and to equip them in their ministry of fulfilling God's mission in the world."²¹ From Edge's assertion, it is clear that pastors, who do not equip the laity through instructions of the Word so that they can utilize their individual spiritual gifts, will find themselves engrossed in performing mundane tasks that others could perform thereby impeding the Christian mission of making disciples. A typical example was Moses not equipping others who were potentially capable to handle the administrative and/or legal affairs of the people. Instead, he was prioritizing the role of judge and jury all day long, neglecting the role of equipping people and relegating his ordained assignment of deliverance to a secondary status. No wonder the statistics reflect that "1,500 pastors leave their assignments every month in the United States because of conflict of interest, burnout, or moral failure and that the average pastoral career lasts only fourteen years."²²

Pastoral teaching spiritually clarifies issues, agenda items of the ministry vis-à-vis issues, agenda items in the corporate, or government sectors. For example, in the corporate sector, the emphasis is on maximizing shareholder's returns on their investment. Therefore, every decision revolves around preserving or protecting the bottom line. Whereas in the ministry of God, our thrust is maximizing souls that are saved and ensuring that the membership be built up or empowered. In my context for

²¹ Edge, *The doctrine of the Laity*, 77.

²² Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 213-224.

example, most of the board members are educated and come from the private sector. Some of them are business owners or administrators. They may not need a training exercise in administration or management, as it may be second nature to them. Certain aspects as they pertain to the principles of management such as analyzing data/statistics, financial records, extrapolations from production charts, hiring, firing, performance evaluations, etc. are almost second nature to them. In a church board meeting that involves one of these issues, their learned knowledge or natural instincts kick into gear almost instantaneously. Inasmuch as they perhaps have been taught in the scriptures, it becomes a teachable moment for the Pastor/Shepherd to enlighten them in how Christians should handle, for example, the retrenching of a fellow brother or sister.

The third advice was for Moses to “choose qualified leaders with whom to share the work load (18:21).”²³ “Your pastor needs you and you need your pastor. God designed this unique relationship to be a partnership. The fruit of this relationship results in glory to God and growth in your church. God’s vision and plan for reaching the world cannot be accomplished with just pastors and no laypeople. When Jesus launched His ministry, even He, the Son of God chose twelve men to help Him. Your pastor can not do it alone.”²⁴

Moses should have remembered the division of labor from the inception of the mission of delivering the Israelites. As he made excuses such as having a speech impediment to opt out of the plan, God provided his brother Aaron (Ex 3). It seems as if he had also forgotten that they had just defeated the Amalekites as he stood on the hill

²³ Mayhue, “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” 213-224.

²⁴ Reiland, *Shoulder to Shoulder*, 2.

with the staff of God in his hand. As he lifted up his hands to God, the Israelites prevailed, and when he lowered his hands, Amalek prevailed. As his hands grew weary, they used a stone, and then Aaron and Hur held up his hands on both sides to keep them steady until the sunset and Joshua defeated Amalek (Ex 17).

In choosing capable people to assist with the ministry, four basic qualities are outlined in verse 21. Should Moses embrace these instructions, implement this plan, and delegate these tasks (18:22), fruitfulness will follow (18:23). The four basic qualities according to Mayhue include:

1. Sufficient—The persons must be able, i.e. gifted and capable. Paul's final letter to Timothy strikes the chord (2 Tm 2:2): The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to the faithful persons who will be able to teach others also. Sufficiency goes beyond mere motivation and adds to ability/skill with excellence. The point is this—not one without the other, but together they accomplish God's mission through people in extraordinary ways. Take Peter for example, when he was motivated (Lk 22:33), but without sufficient giftedness, he failed (Lk 22:54-62). But after God enabled him at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11), Peter served God's purposes with notable results (Acts 2:14-42).
2. Submitted—these leaders also need to fear God. The internal quality of fearing God must be teamed up with an outward submission. Saul had externals (1 Sm 9:2), but not the internal. By comparison, David is described by God as; "A man after My heart, who will do My will" (Acts 13:22).
3. Spiritual—Able and fearing God heads the list of the four. Next comes "persons of truth". They will be trustworthy if they are committed to God's truth (Prv 3:3-4).
4. Steadfast—Jethro described the fourth and final as "those who hate dishonest gain." This might be the only quality that is not immediately obvious. It seems to go beyond honest to include the time of testing to ensure the "hate of dishonest gain" which assures of a steadfast, habitual quality."²⁵

"Every person being considered for a leadership role in the church should be evaluated on the basis of these four spiritual qualities, *not* on his success in the

²⁵ Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 217.

marketplace alone. We need to examine people as God does—with primary regard to their qualities, not external.”²⁶ “When selecting the king of Israel, God so instructed Samuel (1 Sm 16:7): But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”²⁷ “So, a strong spiritual leader must be sufficient, submitted, spiritual, and steadfast. Note they must be all four at one time. Anything less, meant he was not yet qualified. Did Moses heed Jethro’s counsel? According to Exodus 18:24-27, he did. Decades later (the 40th year) Moses recalls that he did (Dt 1:9-18). Interestingly, if we follow the historical narrative, Moses chose able men (Ex 18:25), sufficient, discerning men (Dt 1:13), submitted, wise men (Dt 1:13) spiritual, and experienced men (Dt 1:13), steadfast.”²⁸ In summary, The Pastor needs a team of dedicated, committed, and spiritual people.

After heeding Jethro’s advice, it is narrated in the following chapter that the Israelites reached Mount Sinai- a critical point in the deliverance story where they met God and they were consecrated.

Exodus 19:16-20:

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God. They took their stand at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to

²⁶ Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 217.

²⁷ Mayhue. "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 215-216.

²⁸ Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 219.

the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

In the next chapter, Exodus 20, God presents the sacred document of the Ten Commandments to Moses. This document has become the moral code throughout the annals of human history. One can surmise that with the relinquishment of the daily and mundane tasks into capable hands, Moses was finding time to commune with God and to make strides into the mission at hand- Deliverance of the Israelites into the Promised Land.

New Testament

According to Mayhue, as we “fast forward fifteen centuries, God’s main focus has transitioned from Israel to the church. In her infancy, the church (especially the apostles) faced similar leadership challenges as Moses. Interestingly, the apostles took an almost identical approach, as if they were consulting Jethro’s ancient words of wisdom. They needed to delegate responsibility to additional men who possessed the identical core qualities that distinguished Moses’ handpicked, expanded leadership group.”²⁹ Acts 6:1-7 reads:

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.” What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip,

²⁹ Mayhue, “Authentic Spiritual Leadership,” 219.

Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

A close reading of the text reveals that as the Word of God germinated and souls were being saved, the apostles became adept at retrieving a page from Jethro's book of advice to Moses. They realized that the salient mission of delivering this world from sin and damnation could and should not be delayed, hindered or capsized because they were distracted by the mundane or administrative issues that could be delegated to spiritual, capable and God-fearing people. The heavenly model or as we call it in today's business jargon or parlance, the template had been developed in Exodus 18. All the apostles needed to do were to massage or adapt it to the situation currently at hand.

Acts 6 is divided into basically similar strophes as Exodus 18. The first strophe connotes issues being presented to the apostles that could be handled by lay people instead of the shepherd or pastor who is entrusted with the salient mission of deliverance. Verse 1 reads, "Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food."

Raymond E. Brown, in his book, *An Introduction to the New Testament* stated, "Suddenly, after the picture of the church as being of one mind, Acts 6:1-6 tells us about a hostile division among the Jerusalem Christians. Common goods are no longer a sign of koinonia, for two groups of Jewish believers within the Jerusalem community are fighting over them. Why? The designation as one group as Hellenists (Greek-like) whose leaders have only Greek names (6:5) suggests that they were Jews who spoke only Greek and who were raised acculturated to Greco-Roman civilization. Deductively by contrast,

then, the other group called the Hebrews would have spoken Aramaic or Hebrew (sometimes Greek as well) and would have been more culturally Jewish in outlook.”³⁰

The narrative further explained, “There was also a theological difference among them that was not clearly delineated in this passage of scripture as apostles, who were clearly Hebrew Christians have not let their faith in Jesus stop them from worshipping in the Temple. However, Stephen, who would become the Hellenist leader, speaks as if the Temple has no meaning.”³¹ “In any case the disagreement among these Jerusalem Christians has been translated into finances (as have many inner-church fights ever since) because the Hebrews (surely the larger group) are attempting to force the Hellenists to conformity by shutting off common funds from the Hellenist widows, who presumably were totally dependent on this support.”³² This scenario presented an atmosphere that could have plunged the apostles into being judge and jury or taking on the responsibility of distributing the food fairly themselves, as Moses did in Exodus 18. Nonetheless, they knew that their ultimate mission was to continue winning souls for Christ as was being accomplished already by the increase in membership among the disciples.

The second strophe as presented in verse 2 is reminiscent of Jethro’s advice to Moses, except that the twelve did not wait for an advisor; they perhaps consulted the scriptures and found Jethro’s advice to Moses. They summoned the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait tables. In order to deal with this situation, the Twelve summoned the multitude of

³⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: Doubleday Dell Publishing Company, 1997), 293.

³¹ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

³² Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

the disciples (perhaps a technical name for those who could vote) to settle the issue. In this session, the twelve avoid the obvious, simple solutions. Although Hebrew themselves, they do not demand that the Hellenists either conform or leave. Moreover, they refuse to take over the administration of the common goods; specifically they do not wish to involve themselves in the waiting on or serving tables in order to ensure a fair distribution of food. Rather, they wished to allow the Hellenists to have their own leaders and administrators of common goods.”³³

They made it crystal clear that their primary duty was “to preach, (Acts 15:32), to oversee (1 Tm 3:1), to shepherd (1 Pt 5:2-3), to evangelize (2 Tm 4:5), and to rule/preside (1 Tm 5:17)”³⁴ so that the believers and or disciples can continue to increase as was being manifested right before their eyes. In essence their task was to “perfect the saints, do the work of the ministry and edify the body of Christ as illustrated in the fourth chapter of Ephesians.”³⁵ They were not prepared to relinquish the sacred mission or the Great Commission of making disciples to the back burner by becoming engrossed with tasks that could be delegated to spiritually capable people.

The third strophe as amplified in verses 3-5, illustrates that the apostles were willing and ready to delegate some of the responsibilities of the mission into spiritually capable hands. Instead of being saddled with all the responsibilities, hoping, and waiting for an advisor, they involved the community of believers in the decision making equation. “Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing,

³³ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

³⁴ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

³⁵ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom, we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.” What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Phillip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.” Raymond Brown posits, “The acceptance of the suggestion made by the Twelve was a decision in the early church for pluralism and for what we have come to call today the hierarchy of the doctrine.”³⁶ “The cultural and theological disagreements that existed in Jerusalem between the Hebrews and the Hellenists were implicitly being judged as less important than their common belief in Jesus. Most believers in Jesus decided very early that it was better to tolerate certain differences of practice and thought rather than destroy a koinonia based on Christology.”³⁷

The following salient themes that can be drawn from these verses include:

1. The involvement of the community of believers by the apostles in this major decision. It further buttresses the assertion that as soon as there is cause for a paradigm shift in the church, the pastor/clergy has to involve the laity so that the mission and/or vision can be explicated clearly and be fully understood by all.
2. The community of believers participated in choosing or “electing” the leadership; however, again, it was made crystal clear by the apostles that they must select from among themselves, persons of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom the apostles may appoint.

One must note the emphasis on spiritually capable people, as there are capable people who may not be spiritual or verse versa. This becomes a very prayerful and contemplative moment for the pastor/clergy as his/her mission of winning souls is also

³⁶ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

³⁷ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 294.

intractably intertwined with this secondary role of leadership provided by the laity. If these chosen spiritual leaders execute their tasks to the best of their abilities under the guide of the Holy Spirit, it provides the pastors ample opportunity and latitude to devote themselves to prayer and to serving the word. In the process, the community of believers flourishes as more and more souls are saved and delivered from the bondage of sin. If the spiritually capable leaders renege on their responsibilities, it puts unwanted and undeserved burden on the pastor/clergy to attend to these mundane and administrative issues/tasks that could have been executed by the laity. “It then causes the pastor to do an impossible task. He then has to be an administrator, an evangelist, a preacher, a pastor, a teacher, a counselor, an organizer, a promoter, a scholar, and other things. Dedicated pastors try to fulfill all of these expectations.”³⁸ “However, a study was made several years ago of the major responsibilities of the pastor. It concluded that the average pastor spends most of his working time doing administrative tasks. However, most pastors did not enjoy doing administration; and they did not do it well.”³⁹

Mayhue again asserts that this leadership group should be:

- Sufficient—these new leaders were those whom the apostles could put in charge of the task. In other words, they were able and equipped to handle the opportunity.
- Submitted—They were to be full of the Spirit. In other words, they were to be submitted as God-fearing believers.
- Spiritual—They were to be full of wisdom. In other words, they were to be spiritual men, men of truth and therefore trustworthy to carry out their assigned responsibilities.

³⁸ Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity*, 77.

³⁹ Edge, *The Doctrine of the Laity*, 77.

- Steadfast— They were to be of good reputation. In other words, they were to be time-tested.

Someone might wonder why after 1,500 years, these qualifying traits had not changed or been upgraded. The answer is that they did not need to be changed because the character of God had not changed and the nature of spiritual leadership remained the same. Did these qualities at the church's beginning continue as she matured? As expected, three decades later they had not changed in their core qualities, although Paul had added more explicit detail to their basic descriptions as found in 1 Timothy."⁴⁰

The fourth strophe concerns consecration. Verse 6 says that they had the men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. This reflects being empowered for the work of God. "The choice of administrators in 6:6 is done in the context of praying and the laying on of hands. Although development of church structure reflects sociological necessity, in the Christianity self- understanding, the Holy Spirit given by the risen Christ guides the church in a way that allows basic structural development to be seen as embodying Jesus Christ's will for his church."⁴¹ Even Christ told his disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1). Verse 4 says, "He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father." In Verse 8, Jesus told his disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Experience has demonstrated that the work of the Lord requires not only our natural and acquired skills; it also requires being spiritually equipped. Being spiritually

⁴⁰ Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership," 220.

⁴¹ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 295.

equipped does not only refer to attending Bible Study or Sunday school class, one needs the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the long haul for there are demonic forces waiting to derail the mission of Christ. Ephesians 6:10 reads:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand therefore, fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

The fifth and final strophe echoes success as in Exodus 18 after Moses delegated the mundane and administrative duties to the spiritually capable people. In Exodus, they reached Mount Sinai while here in Acts, verse 7, the word of God spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. As Jethro's advice to Moses to choose capable men to assist with the mantle of leaders provided an avenue for Moses to make progress towards the Promised Land, we see progress being made towards fulfilling the instructions of the Great Commission. "As depicted in Acts, the Twelve made a proposal, approved by the multitude of the Jerusalem community. Nevertheless, none of those present at this meeting could have foreseen how far their decision would lead."⁴²

In addition, Brown asserts, "This brief scene offers important subjects for reflection. Nowhere do we see more clearly the unique role of the twelve maintaining the

⁴² Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 295.

wholeness of God's renewed people. They preserve the koinonia by their solution for the Hellenists to remain as fully recognized brothers and sisters in Christ. Moreover, in terms of church structure, no blue print had come from Jesus showing how the community of those who believed in him was to be administered. In Acts 6, believers are increasing in numbers and are arguing with one another—two sociological factors that always produce a need for defining leadership more clearly. Accordingly, we hear of the seven who became the administrators for the Hellenist believers. Probably administrators also emerge for the Hebrew Christian community at the same time, for henceforth James (the brother of the Lord) and the elders (presbyters) appear as authorities in Jerusalem, alongside the apostles.”⁴³

These administrators were not to lord over the people but to primarily provide the support or the shoulders the apostles needed in order for them to devote themselves to the more important task of winning souls for Christ. This is what is needed in our churches today. Just as the Lord has called the Pastors to the sacred ministry, God has also called us, the laity, to be available to hold up their hands or else they will have to devote too much time to the mundane affairs of operating the church. The Lord needs all Christians in the vineyard—both Pastors and laity. The role of the Pastor is to equip, to teach, and to prepare the laity for the task of providing the necessary support.

Conclusion

God's deliverance of God's people has always been a priority as we have seen throughout several generations up to the point of sending Jesus Christ to redeem us from

⁴³ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 295.

sin and reconcile us to our Lord. In the process, God has provided shepherds and pastors to lead persons from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and the entrapment of sin to eternal life. However, for this salvific plan to succeed here on earth, it requires all Christians to be involved. This is not the work of the clergy alone. The laity has to avail themselves to assist the pastors in fulfilling this mission.

Have we ever wondered why our pews are not full on Sunday mornings? In fact, according to the Pew Research, although Christianity remains the dominant religion in the U.S., the percentage of Christians is on the decline. While 92 percent of the population claim to believe in God, the percentage of Christians have plummeted five percentage points in the last five years declining from 78 percent to 73 percent from 2007 to 2012.⁴⁴ Interestingly during that period, while there was a three-percentage point drop among white Mainline Christians from 18 percent to 15 percent, Black Protestants maintained their 8 percent share of the Christian Protestant number over the five year under review.⁴⁵ However, Blacks make up 13 percent of the population.

Although many factors are contributing to the decline as noted in the reports such as population shifts and composition, it is primarily attributable to Christians leaving the brunt of the Christian mission to the clergy. As repeatedly emphasized, the pastor's role is to teach and equip the saints for the work of the Lord and it is the laity's responsibility to be available to assist the pastor in the day to day administrative tasks so that he can devote his time to prayer, preaching, evangelizing and winning more souls to Christ. If

⁴⁴ *Pew Research Center for People and the Press* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2007-12).

⁴⁵ Census.gov., "United States Census Bureau," accessed August 21, 2014, <https://www.census.gov: State & County Facts>.

our pastors are tired and burned out in large proportions in a short period of time as the statistics indicate, both pastors and laity may have to come to the realization sooner than later that this is a hand in glove relationship.

The harvest cannot remain plentiful while the laborers remain few endlessly. As the pastors teach and equip, the word of God should germinate in the laity's hearts and arouse their sensibilities to service in whatever sphere of ministry their gifts, skills, experiences can be utilized in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. We should learn from the potential debacles that almost threatened two major episodes in our deliverance stories in Exodus 18 and Acts 6. In Exodus, Moses' failure to involve the people in the administrative tasks of the mission impeded their progress. It is analogous to pastors in today's churches who want to do it all alone while the multitude folds their hands.

In Acts, the apostles delegated the serving of tables to spiritually able men and dedicated themselves to spiritual matters. Nevertheless, we should be careful how we rush to conclusion on Moses' lack of delegation. It may be evident that he had not taught or equipped them or shared the vision clearly so that all were on board; however, we observed in several instances the multitude's recalcitrance, disobedience and lack of faith in a God who had rescued them slavery to freedom, opened a path in the Red Sea for their safe passage, provided them manna from heaven, pillar of clouds by day and pillar of fire by night.

Pastors today experience some of the same situations and attitude from the laity. Instead of whining and complaining about all that is not right in our various ministries, our posture should be that of service or holding up our pastors' hands in executing the administrative or mundane tasks of the ministry so that our pastors can devote their time

to prayer and serving the word as the apostles suggested in Acts 6. For them, they already had a consultant in the scriptures called Jethro. They wasted no time in borrowing a page from the dossier he presented to Moses. In both instances, as soon as the solutions were discovered, progress appeared. In Exodus, the progress to the Promised Land continued while in Acts, the word of God continued to spread and the number of disciples increased. Christians today already have these consulting Scriptures and success stories. The heavenly model or the template has already been developed. Both clergy and laity should utilize them to impact not only our churches but also our communities and the world at large.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Clergy burnout, underutilization of congregational gifts, and ineffective ministries all have a few factors in common. Among them are the lack of equipping the saints for ministry, underutilization of the laity and the indifference of the laity to maturing in the Word of God. Ephesians 4:11-13 states, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.” In this historical analysis, an attempt will be made to explain the following:

1. The Origin of the Laity in the Christian Church
2. The Historical Role of the Laity in the Christian Church
3. Historical Lay Leadership in some Mainline Denominations/Congregations
4. Lay Leadership/Theology During the Middle Age, Reformation and Modern Ages
5. Equipping the Saints for Ministry

Due to my Methodist persuasion, particularly the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) denomination, a few references will be drawn from that experience. From all indications, it was not the Lord’s intention for the salvific purpose to be the responsibility

of the clergy alone. In the process of redeeming the world, the Lord chose the Twelve; however, there were many who followed his teachings, were converted, and became Disciples. The Twelve are normally referred to as the Apostles. Just as the disciples outnumbered the apostles, such is the case in our present day Christian churches all over the world with lay members outnumbering the clergy. Therefore, the sheer outnumbering of the clergy presupposes that the clergy will have to equip and rely on some of the more spiritually gifted laity in fulfilling the Christian mission of making disciples. For this process to be effective or to succeed, these spiritual laypeople/leaders will have to be equipped by the pastor/clergy so that their assistance can bear spiritual fruits.

In the early period following Jesus' death, the church preserved what is called a *koinonia*—a form of common fellowship and caring for all with the resources of all the members. Particularly, emphasis was placed on caring for the indigent, orphans and widows in their midst, as reflected in the book of Acts. All the believers prayed, worshipped and lived together as one unit. "This handful of disciples was, indeed, a small community. Nevertheless, as in every form of community, it had its own leadership. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had some sort of leadership role, undoubtedly as the most respected member of this group. Peter, for his part, is portrayed as a leader or spokesman. It is he who addresses the group of brothers (*adelphoi*), and in calling these people brothers, he is speaking to all, not just the eleven."¹

Historical accounts reveal that the sharp dichotomy of clergy and laity did not appear until the middle of the third century. When one takes up the theme of the term *laikos*, lay, in reference to scripture, the major difficulty is crystal-clear: the scriptures,

¹ Kenan B. Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 1993), 13.

both Old and New, never use the term laikos. Lay and laity, in the sense of the non-cleric, is a later idea and cannot be superimposed on scriptural texts.² It was the original disciples' understanding that each of them was called to service in the vineyard of the Lord and although their gifts were different, they were all useful in fulfilling the mission of the Gospel- the building up the body of Christ until they all came to maturity and to full knowledge of the Lord.

The Christian mission can be compared to warfare. As the commanders/generals do not take the training and equipping of the troops casually, it is in this similar vein that the clergy should equip and train the laity— particularly the lay leadership to assist with tasks that are in their purview so that the clergy can devote themselves to the spiritual aspects of the ministry such as prayer, fasting, communing with God and listening for the vision and strategy that will bring victory to his kingdom here on earth. It is incumbent on the clergy to provide the avenue for spiritual growth of the laity such as Sunday school, Bible study and other spiritual training exercises so that the laity can relieve them of waiting tables and be the boots on the ground. If the pastors/clergy waits tables or be the boots on the ground, it may cause them to lose focus, expand their energies and wear or burn them out to the point of frustration and extreme fatigue.

The AME Book of Discipline emphasizes, “The mission of the Church School in the African Methodist Episcopal Church shall be to teach, train, nurture, prepare and recruit adults and children in God’s word for Christian Service, emphasizing those Christian principles which are essential for effective Christian growth and participation.

² Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 18.

This teaching and training shall be designed to prepare them for and assist them with effective living and Christian leadership in a changing society.”³

From the foregoing, one can conclude that the early church fathers did not intend for the entire work load to be shouldered only by the clergy; however, the clergy must employ the dictates in the discipline such as providing the atmosphere for training and equipping to enable the laity who will assist them in shouldering the responsibilities of the ministry. Inference can also be made that providing the avenue for training, equipping, effective recruitment and utilization of laity, is what distinguishes a growing and thriving ministry from struggling, docile and eventually defunct ministries. Both clergy and laity must realize that the Almighty God has bestowed us with separate and distinct gifts that should be utilized for the mutual benefit of His church and His people. In the proper Christian environment where each understands his proper role, there should be no turf control or usurpation of power.

The Origin of the Laity

There are many historical accounts to which we can refer as the origin of the laity; however, some scholars attribute the appointment of the Seven in the book of Acts as the origin of the laity simply because the apostles refer to their tasks as serving tables. Others raised the Seven to the level of Deacons, although John Chrysostom in his book *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia* noted, “Though the appointment of the seven (deacons) may be traced to the sixth chapter of the Book of Acts—often considered to be

³ The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2008).

the embryonic source of the diaconate-the word deacons appears nowhere in that text.”⁴

In his *Commentary of the Book of Acts*, Chrysotom categorically denies that the Seven were ordained as deacons, perhaps because distinct ecclesiastical orders were not in existence at the time of the apostles. There were indeed no ordained deacons; but neither were there consecrated bishops or presbyters, as we have come to perceive these orders or ordinations in later centuries and in current practice. According to St. John Chrysotom, the Seven were appointed solely for the service of the tables, an occasional and specific function at the time.⁵ Evidently, one can infer that the Jesus community was then divided into those who devoted themselves to prayer and the delivery of the word and the larger community. In that larger community, the apostles had established a lay church leadership by the appointment of the Seven to wait or serve the tables.

However, it should be quickly noted with the assertion of William J. Rademacher, “Most of the modern church simply did not exist in the New Testament times. We will do our best on this trip if we first die, at least temporarily, to our own experience of church and ministry, so that we come to the threshold of the New Testament open to whatever we find there. We need to clear our minds of all images of the priesthood, episcopacy, papacy, and diaconate. Leaving these pictures and experiences behind will, in fact, require a real death.”⁶ On the subject on drawing a solid line of demarcation between the clergy and laity and rendering the role of the laity as inferior to the clergy, Rademacher

⁴ John Chrysostom, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2009), 86.

⁵ Chrysostom, *Remembering and Reclaiming Diakonia*, 87.

⁶ William J. Rademacher, *Lay Ministry-A Theological, Spiritual, & Pastoral Handbook* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing company, 1991), 5-6.

further questioned, “How is it that Jesus himself did not come from a clerical line if churches are to be about clerics”?⁷ Brown confirms, “To some extent, this development is a surprise since the historical Jesus was emphatically a layman, critical to some degree of Temple procedure and treated with hostility by the priesthood.”⁸

To speak or write of the laity, one must briefly define the ministry of the laity. As noted earlier, the word laity comes from the Greek word *laikos* or the Jewish word *laos* which means a people. Osborne asserts, “In this literature one finds that *laos* has several layers of meanings:

- a) A crowd, a population, a people;
- b) A nation (ethne);
- c) Israel as a nation;
- d) The Jesus community itself, which is called at times a new people, *laos kainos*.

The last understanding (d) is evident particularly in the early patristic period, with Justin and Clement of Alexandria.”⁹ “It is the usage of the term *kleros* which gives rise to the concomitant Christian use of *laikos*.”¹⁰ “It is only at this period of time that one can speak meaningfully of *laikos* as found in Christian documents as a term of contrast and category.”¹¹ The new people gathered in worship were seen as the *laos*. It is precisely in this latter context of the gathered worshipping community that we begin to see a use of

⁷ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry-A Theological*, ix.

⁸ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: Doubleday Dell Publishing Group 1997), 701.

⁹ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

¹⁰ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

¹¹ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 20.

laos for those other than the leaders of the worshipping community. In Justin's Apology, we see that it is the people, laos who say Amen to the prayer of the leader."¹² "In other words, in the later Christian community, the assembly of disciples began to be called laos, and it is from this later nomenclature for the worshipping community that the distinction in the Christian community between the people and the leadership (laity and clergy) began to arise. The specific distinction of lay-cleric originates, therefore, in a post-apostolic church, not in the New Testament itself. The specific distinction also originates on the basis of a pastoral situation (i.e. liturgical celebration) and not on the basis of any formalized dogmatic stance. The dogmatic or theological rationalization is given to this specific distinction of laity and clergy in a post-200 A.D. church."¹³

Nonetheless, the social or ecclesial ordering of the church into clergy and laity had its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it clarifies roles and avoids confusion as to who performs the specific duties of the ministry. As indicated in Acts, the disciples relinquished or assigned the role of waiting tables to a few capable people while they devoted themselves to prayer. In that scenario, the church or community of believers grew and they kept the koinonia—unity among the believers. On the other hand, it began the process of drawing a solid line of demarcation between the clergy and the laity as the clergy began to distance themselves from the laity.

"The reduction of church life during the second and third centuries—necessary perhaps at the time of expansion, prepared for the unfortunate separation of the Christian community into a large, passive laity directed in word and sacrament by a very small

¹² Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

¹³ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

group, who alone were publicly constituted in the fulltime service, i.e. ordained.”¹⁴ The pronounced influence of the Greco-Roman world was also evident during that period on the church as the “Constantinian appropriation of the higher clergy intensified this development.”¹⁵ The first clear use of the priest for the principal Christian Eucharistic minister (the Bishop), comes at the end of the 2nd century. By the end of the 4th century, all Eucharistic ministers were considered to be Christian priests, sharing in Christ’s priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek.¹⁶

The Historical Role of the Laity

Mary D. Matz, in her book entitled: *Introducing and Testing the Concept and Practice of Shared Ministry in the East Hills Moravian Church*, provides an argument for the increased role of the laity as she paints this picture. “The history of Christianity as it evolved has tended to devalue the role of the laity and make the role of clergy one of a higher order. This practice has introverted the direction of ministry to be narrowed for the most part to God’s people while ministry to the world is largely neglected. Even care of God’s people has been limited by the hours pastors are able to give proportionately to the size of the flocks they serve. Congregations in such an atmosphere become ingrown serving only themselves, the vision of the mission of the church dims as its perspective narrows, and the biblical concept of mission is in danger of being lost. Who are the laity and how can we recapture a feeling for and an understanding of the function of the whole

¹⁴ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 21.

¹⁶ Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 702.

people of God?¹⁷

Marlin Alvin Mentz defines the ministry of the laity as “they recognize Christ as their Lord and that they are the church, God’s people, who have been called in baptism to serve (ministry) in all life’s sectors through their lives and words. To put it simply; the ministry of the laity is to be the church of the world. The definition is adequate and simple, but to be meaningful it needs to be expanded along the lines of what it means to be church.”¹⁸ He further stated, “The Evanston Report, in my estimation, fills the gap of what it means for the laity to be church when it states:

It is the laity who draws together work and worship; it is they who bridge the gulf between the Church and the world; and it is they who manifest in word and action the Lordship of Christ over that world which claims so much of their time and energy and labor.¹⁹

“All—both pastors and laity—need to realize again that the phrase “the ministry of the laity expresses the privilege of the whole church to share in Christ’s ministry to the world.”²⁰

Gary D. Pate notes, “An overview of church history reveals a fascinating story of the layman’s ministry in the church. Historians are not always interested in the layman’s ministry. Most often, the layman’s contribution to a theological discussion and debate will be noted; but his service to the community may go unrecorded. Thus, the journey

¹⁷ Mary D. Matz, *Introducing and Testing the Concept and Practice of Shared Ministry in the East Hills Moravian Church: A Professional Project for the Doctor of Ministry degree at Drew University* (Bethlehem, PA: Drew University 1982), 5.

¹⁸ Marlin A. Mentz, *The Role of the Laity in Mission Strategy at the Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Douglasville, Georgia: A Doctoral Thesis at Candler school of Theology* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 1976), 85.

¹⁹ Mentz, *The Role of the Laity in Mission Strategy*, 85.

²⁰ Mentz, *The Role of the Laity in Mission Strategy*, 85.

through church history to find the involvement of laymen in visitation is like a thread in some exquisite tapestry. It will surface here and there, running all through the garment, but not always prominently noted.”²¹ Pate added that “The first period where the involvement of laity is to be noted is in the New Testament church. The early church placed a high premium on service. From 1 Corinthians 12, we learn that the primitive church was composed of people who carried the ministry of service to their own body and to others. In the New Testament church, every activity, or function, which contributed to the building up of the Christian community, was brought under the category of service. All Christians were servants and ministers called to a ministry. In truth, the early church was a layman's church. Everyone ministered and served one another in the fellowship. There seemed to be a wholesome acceptance of the priesthood of all believers. The power struggle for the positions of office had not yet become a significant factor.”²²

The words of Niebuhr about the commitment to service of the early believers are enlightening. “The primitive church is composed of persons who carry out the ministry of service. This is surely the meaning of the word that is conveyed in helpers, administrators, healers, and others listed in 1 Corinthians 12. We are likely to suppose the administrative work required in the first century church was much simpler than the modern congregation of the same size. But this supposition is probably mistaken. When a first century Jew or pagan decided to become a Christian, he became dependent upon a

²¹ Gary D. Pate, *Design and Implementation of Lay Ministry of Visiting and Contacting Absentees and Prospects-a-Professional Project for the Doctor of Ministry Program at Drew University* (Madison, NJ: Drew University, 1983), 29.

²² Pate, *Design and Implementation of Lay Ministry*, 29.

way in which the modern Christian can scarcely imagine.”²³ It appears certain that in the period of the primitive church, the layman served effectively, and the lay leadership basically fulfilled the church’s mission.²⁴ Women’s role in this service of the early church was also prominently noted as “widows were noted for their ministry of prayer and ministry to other women. We are justified in saying that the early church practiced the concept of every Christian being a servant.”²⁵

Historical Lay Leadership in Some Mainline Denominations/Congregations

John Wesley’s methods and views will be referenced on this subject. John Wesley has been called “the most influential protestant church leader in the English-speaking world since the Reformation. He was the pioneer of lay ministry.”²⁶ Wesley is noted for the origination of the class leader concept that is very characteristic of Methodism. Wesley’s utilization of ordinary lay people as class leaders was an effective tool in keeping the church or the body of Christ connected in the vision and mission of the church. The concept that began as a strategy to repay the debt of the church soon mushroomed into an effective means of keeping the church connected in fellowship and love. Each class leader was appointed from among the laity to provide leadership for a

²³ Richard Niebuhr and Daniel G. Williams, *The Ministry in Historical Perspective* (New York, NY: Harper Brothers, 1956), 11.

²⁴ Niebuhr and Williams, *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, 30.

²⁵ Niebuhr and Williams, *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, 30.

²⁶ Ki Bok Lee, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity in the Methodist Church of Korea through the Class Meeting: A Dissertation Project*, San Francisco Theological Seminary (San Anselmo, CA: San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1995), 50.

group of about twelve persons to ensure that the membership who lived in the same locality met once a week and was informed of each other's challenges, well-being and spiritual growth. In the process, the ministers were informed of those for example who were sick, backsliding or had left the fellowship.

The class meeting became much more than a capital campaign. Thomas Jackson in the article, "John Wesley, The Works of John Wesley, vol. 8, 1972," described it as such "it became a crucial tool for enabling Methodists to watch over one another in love, to support and encourage one another in their lives with God." In fact, John Wesley thought the oversight and support that the class meeting provided was so important that it became a requirement for membership in a Methodist society. To be a Methodist meant that you were involved in a weekly class meeting. Wesley himself commented on the "fruits of the class meetings."

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to 'bear one another's burdens,' and naturally to 'care for each other.' As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And 'speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love.

James L. Garlow states: "His most outstanding contribution to Christianity was probably not in the things we commonly associate with Wesley. Rather, it was his extensive training and utilization of the laity for meaningful, systematic, and consistent ministry. British Methodism would not have existed without its extensive utilization of the laity."²⁷ "Wesley's views of what was fundamental in ministering the gospel were not

²⁷ James L. Garlow, *Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors Working Together* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), 72.

applicable only to the ordained in the Church of England or to his own traveling preachers. Wesleyan lay office-bearers properly claimed a share of the responsibility for it and this was reflected in the rapid proliferation of Methodist societies.”²⁸

It is noted, “Wesley became the founder of the church that employed lay preachers, and employed them with honor and dignity. The expansion and extension of his work became so widespread that it necessitated the installation of helpers and associates.”²⁹ Wesley’s utilization of laypeople recorded much success in that “during the half century of ministry, he trained 653 lay preachers. Between 1739 and 1765, he trained 193 preachers. From 1765 to 1790, he trained 460 lay preachers.”³⁰

One would ask how did he achieve such success in the eighteenth century when most of our churches are faltering today? Lee asserts that he “also oversaw the selection and equipping of another group labeled local preachers in addition to the vast army of class leaders, trustees, stewards, and visitors of the sick”³¹ As analogous to the texts of Genesis 18 and Acts 6, “He chose men that were prudent, trustworthy, zealous, and gifted to serve as helpers under his direction. The lay preachers were truly ministers in a sense that was not less important than, though different from, the clergy.”³² In utilizing God’s people for God’s service, Wesley practiced inclusiveness. He even used women as opposed to most of the churches of his era. “It is amazing to note the fact that not only

²⁸ Margaret Batty, *Stages in the Development and Control of Wesleyan Lay Leadership 1791-1878* (Nashville, TN: Methodist Publishing House, 1988).

²⁹ Garlow, *Partners in Ministry*, 73.

³⁰ Garlow, *Partners in Ministry*, 73.

³¹ Bok, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 51.

³² Bok, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 53.

did Wesley use men in the work of the Lord but he also used women.”³³

“To Wesley, Ministry was not dependent upon ordination. Ministry was dependent and expected of all followers of Christ—laity and clergy. Wesley understood the laity as ministers. The early societies were centers of lay vitality. Wesley’s theology of the laity conveys that the functions of the laity and clergy can be considered equal. However; all laypersons do not have the same office of the ‘churches’ ministry. This understanding of the clergy-laity relationship means that a partnership exists, not a two-fold division of labor”³⁴

Wesley’s effective utilization of lay preachers, called the Circuit Riders was also manifested in the evangelizing of African Americans during America’s Colonial era. Most of the other major denominations both overtly or silently encouraged slavery; and thought that African Americans were not fully human and therefore, did not have souls to be saved. However, Methodists emboldened by John Wesley, denounced slavery, and described it as the greatest villainy in human history. It is reported that at one of the prayer meetings of the Methodist Circuit Riders that Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), became saved. Even though the founding and struggles of the AMEC church are beyond the scope of this narrative, it is worth noting that Methodism was attractive to African Americans and therefore, the AMEC incorporated most of the Methodist’s doctrine including the class leader system.

The Methodist or Wesley’s unique experience and utilization of the laity in reaching the masses of the church or the world were not employed fully in other mainline

³³ Bok, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 52.

³⁴ Bok, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 53.

churches such as the Roman Catholic Church. This church that claims to be the original church as it dates back to the first century seemed to misinterpret the priesthood of all believers as it overemphasized the role of the clergy over the the laity. Ordination of the clergy presupposes that this group had become a class' to itself relegating the masses or laos to an inferior status or as God's frozen people. "The dogmatic presupposition on the ordination which has almost created an ontological situation for the ordained is clearly one of those theories which have in part, a hypothetical quality about it. The terms *ordo* and *taxis* are not the problematic issues. The use of such terms could easily be considered acceptable. That there should be some sort of order and arrangement within a society such as the Christian community cannot be faulted. The terms themselves are not the problem, even though they are not biblical. Rather, it is the interpretation that was given to these terms, which brought on the problem. The orders in the Christian community were given a status similar to those in the socio-political world at the time. They became Christian castes.³⁵

With the dismantling of the koinonia, and the stratification of the church, not only did the clergy distance themselves from the laity, it also brought about several questions with which the church leadership at the time had to grapple such as:

- A. Is the church's mission clerical or lay?
- B. Is the stratification biblical?
- C. Are not the gifts of the believers for the growth of the church and the promulgation of its mission, be it by the laity or clergy, come from the same source, which is Jesus?

³⁵ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 29-30.

D. Was the stratification “based more on Old Testament patterns of priesthood than on the gospels and the other New Testament writings?”³⁶

Additionally, certain forces at stake in the early church such as an uneducated general populace, quite naturally, kept the ordinary laity, *plebs* from any insightful ecclesial and socio-political role³⁷ in the church and society at large. The Canon Law in the Middle Ages further compounded the division between the laity and the clergy as it basically drew a hard line of demarcation between the roles and functions of the church and relegated the laity into a spectator status. “It is canon law which formulated a stringent, even called a divinely instituted bi-partite division of the entire Christian world; lay/cleric.”³⁸ As Ki Bok Lee postulated, “In a word, there was no lay theology in the Middle Ages. At that time, all clergy were regarded as called to a higher order. On the other hand, the laity was regarded as a lower status. Indeed there was a disposition on the part of some to regard the clergy alone as truly the church. This view manifested itself in the Catholic Church’s allowing only the clergy to drink the communion wine, while the laity must be content with the bread.”³⁹

Hendrik Kraemer referred to the centrality of the priests in the church of the Middle Ages as follows:

Particularly has the West, under the leadership of Rome, been very diligent in elaborating this fundamental pattern expressed in the simple but weighty words: *duo sunt genera Christianorum* (There are two classes in Christianity; the clergy, including those who chose the monastic life, and the laity, sharply demarcated from each other. The line of demarcation was formed by ordination. The *dou*

³⁶ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 39.

³⁷ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 278.

³⁸ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 279-280.

³⁹ Lee, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 43.

genera (two classes) with increasing emphasis meant a superior and inferior class.⁴⁰

On the other hand, he referred to the posture of the Eastern Orthodox Church as “maintaining a less logical and less rigid attitude than Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic Church has the great distinction between the superior class of the clergy and the inferior class of the laity. The clergy has various forms of dignity, honor, and rank. But the laity’s rights are defined mainly in terms of obediently receiving the sacraments, teaching and guidance.”⁴¹ Whereas, “The Orthodox East has always kept a somewhat different atmosphere because notwithstanding the same development into clergy, occupying the place of authority and decision for the whole church, and a submissive laity, it somehow kept in mind the church as a sacramental unity of love. Many of the prominent theologians have been and (especially in our time) are outstanding laymen.”⁴²

Lay Leadership/Theology during the Reformation and Modern Ages

Both the underutilization of the laity and their relegation to second-class status would introduce subsequent struggles, dialogues, and movements in both the early church and the Roman Catholic Church. The caste system coupled with the spiritual vacuum in the church provided an atmosphere for these movements to mushroom. “There was a spiritual vacuum in the church of the eleventh and twelfth centuries which gave rise to a

⁴⁰ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 53-54.

⁴¹ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 54.

⁴² Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 54

variety of reform movements”⁴³ One can only imagine the various challenges in the church stemming from this spiritual lethargy created by this gulf between the clergy and laity. The absence of discipleship had already manifested itself. Osborne reflects, “Discipleship is the fundamental criterion by which one can evaluate both the reform movements as such and the reasons why these reform movements appeared in such numbers during this period.”⁴⁴

“The most notable renewal in church history, the Reformation of the 16th century, promised to inaugurate revolutionary change in the status of the laity. The leaders of the Reformation rediscovered and redefined the role of the laity as all of God’s people. Luther attacked the hierarchical conception of the church. Luther, at a decisive movement, rejected obedience to the church as embodied in the hierarchical authority of the Pope, in the name of obedience of the Word of God. The ordinary laypeople were recipients of and not participants in ministry.”⁴⁵ “The Reformation produced four basic concepts of the church and laity as follows:

- a. Before God all Christians have the same standing, a priesthood in which we enter by baptism and through faith.
- b. As a comrade and brother of Christ, each Christian is a priest and needs no mediator save Christ. He has access to the word.
- c. Each Christian is a priest and has an office of sacrifice, not the Mass, but the dedication of himself to the praise and obedience of God, and to bearing the cross.

⁴³ Osborn, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 351.

⁴⁴ Osborn, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 352.

⁴⁵ Lee, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 44.

- d. Each Christian has a duty to hand on the Gospel, which he himself has received.⁴⁶

According to Ki Bok Lee, “This means that each person is not only a priest but also mutually responsible for ministry to his neighbor. The Christian Reformation affirmed the priesthood of all believers, therefore; it was affirming that laity and clergy stood in a place of equal favor with God. There is no special favor from God for the person in a position highly esteemed by humankind or even considered by them to be sacred. There was no distinction between clergy and laity with regard to moral or personal standards. All men and women are equally the subjects of God’s love, although they have been assigned to positions of greater and lesser responsibility.⁴⁷” Lee emphasizes that in the process, souls are saved and the needs of the least of these are attended. “Discipleship was judged against the statements of the gospels. This was the basic logic of discipleship which these movements, in various ways, tended to use.”⁴⁸

The Modern Ages brought about a reevaluation and reconstruction of the gulf between the laity and clergy. Although the renewal of the church in the context of an active and equipped laity is moving rather slowly, some scholars have celebrated this renaissance as a vital significance and relevance for the church. Nonetheless Kraemer argued, “They continued an organizational—if not theological-division between clergy and laity in the churches way after the Reformation.”⁴⁹ “Today, the situation has not

⁴⁶ E. Gordon Rupp, “The Age of Reformation,” Stephen Charles Neil and Ruedi Weber eds., *The Layman in Christian History* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1963), 139.

⁴⁷ Lee, *Strengthening Ministry of the Laity*, 45.

⁴⁸ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 352.

⁴⁹ Charles Bryant Simmons, *Equipping the Saints: A Contextual Approach to Education for Lay Ministry* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 1978), 1.

entirely changed. Nevertheless, there are abundant signs that a far-reaching reformulation of our thinking with regard to the status and role of the laity in the church is underway. As an example of this, a World Council document lists more than 1,400 articles and books on the laity published since 1948, while a Roman Catholic bibliography records more than 2,200 entries.”

The mere proliferation of this dossier “gives promise to the fact that a great number of these writings report actual programs aimed at lay-centered church renewal.”⁵⁰ “Thus, what appears on the horizon is not a rediscovery but a new discovery of the theological and practical importance of the laity in and for the church which is unprecedented in history.”⁵¹ Kraemer further asserts that “While the ecumenical movements of the World Council of Churches played a vital role in creating a consciousness of the need for a theology about the laity, it also pointed to the core of that problem: a theology of the laity presupposes a theology of the church.”⁵²

The Roman Catholic Church has also seen a paradigm shift in its earlier thinking as it has brought discussions of the role and significance of the laity and women to the forefront of its agenda. Due to contemporary issues facing the believers/laity in Vatican II and Post Vatican II conferences, the conservative Catholic Church had to rethink its earlier posture on the second-class status of the laity. Osborne conveys it well when he noted that “Although in the above paragraphs, popes, bishops and clerics appeared at the center of the debate, this entire clash of thinking did not arise because of clerics or

⁵⁰ Simmons, *Equipping the Saints*, 2.

⁵¹ Simmons, *Equipping the Saints*, 2.

⁵² Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 43.

specifically, clerical issues, but rather because of world issues whose primary significance was dominated by the lay. The world of the twentieth century was the world that surrounded the ordinary man and woman, husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter.”⁵³

Equipping the Saints for Ministry

With the reformulation of our thinking about the working relationship and partnership of the clergy and laity, comes the importance of equipping the laity to assume and execute their roles in their local ministries or contexts and the mission of the Christian Church at large. The historical methods utilized by most churches in equipping the saints have been through sermons and classroom settings, such as Sunday school and Bible study. Although these methods have had tremendous benefits, the pastor/clergy is responsible for providing avenues to encourage members of the laity to serve and develop their spiritual gifts. With these methods, the laity can be empowered to also share the burden and responsibility of witness and impact the unsaved world.

“As the laos lost rank, so did their witness subsequently erode and fade.”⁵⁴ It then begs the question, ‘How can ministerial leadership (clergy) move the people of God (laity) from the baptismal font into the full flow of ministry in the church and mission of the world?’⁵⁵ Christensen provided a partial answer to the question when he averred that

⁵³ Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 523.

⁵⁴ Richard D. Hogan, *The Equipping Ministry: A Venture in the New Testament Ministry*, (Bethlehem, PA: Drew University, 1983), 58.

⁵⁵ Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 8.

“one thing can be said with surety about Christianity in the twenty—first century: the role of pastoral leadership is dramatically shifting from representative to participatory models. Leadership involves less the doing of ministry than the dressing of the non-ordained in the intellectual, spiritual, and out-doors outfits needed to minister in the world and become full ministerial partners with the ordained.”⁵⁶

In his assessment, Christensen conveys, “We tend to forget even more that the twelve disciples Jesus called to found his movement were all laypeople. Jesus had three years in which to save the world. How did he choose to spend those three years? Founding a mega church? Launching a mass movement? Building a Temple? Starting a new religion? He chose to spend what time he had training a small cell of disciples. We tend to forget that the Jesus movement was a lay mission. Jesus himself was a layman. He was born not of the tribe of Levi but of the tribe of David. According to Mosaic Law and the Levitical priesthood, Jesus could not be a priest. When the layman Jesus proved to understand more of the scriptures than the priests and religious authorities, the ensuing smears and sneers paved the path to Golgotha.”⁵⁷

As the laity repositions themselves for greater participation in the life of the church, Simmons informs us, “Around the world there are striking examples of laypersons who are becoming both socially and theologically alert to their Christian vocation—living lives of witness in the world. Nevertheless, the total number of Christian laypersons equipped and able to bring their faith to bear upon the secular spheres is too

⁵⁶ Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 8.

⁵⁷ Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 8.

few and too unrepresentative.”⁵⁸ One of the reasons cited for this dilemma is the historical ineptness of the laity. He informed us that “one study indicated that 63 percent of Protestant Christians active in Midwestern congregations could indicate no knowledge of any difference between the Old and New Testaments and that with the revelation of the message of the Good Samaritan, 48 percent thought that it did not mean that the Christian should love a communist (or, in the reference to the current American ethos, a Black, Chicano, or native American). If these findings are accurate, on what basis can the layperson envision his or her life as a part of the Christ’s mission?”⁵⁹

Conclusion

The Christian mission was never intended to be the work of the clergy alone. As we all belong to the priesthood of believers, the Almighty God has bestowed each of us with unique gifts that can be utilized in reaching the masses of the world and connect them to the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. The Jesus movement that began as a lay movement graduated into a hierarchical organization with silos, which at times were confrontational rather than cooperative. In the opening pages of this document, an analogy was drawn between the secular army and the army of God. As we noted, the line of demarcation between the clergy/laity was essentially man’s construct; however, a division of labor is necessary so that the mission of the church can be accomplished. In the writer’s opinion, the clergy has to direct the combat and together with the laity, execute the combat. Another analogy could be that the clergy/pastor represents the coach while the laity presents the players. All are playing on the same team and the ultimate

⁵⁸ Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 21.

⁵⁹ Christensen, *Equipping the Saints*, 26.

purpose is to win the trophy of salvation of the world. In either case, training and equipping will have to take place so that the battle or the game can be won.

Man's selfishness must be subdued or obliterated so that the gospel message can be proclaimed to a world that is hungry for salvation, peace, and harmony. This is necessary for the creation of a world and a worldview that firstly value God, our Lord Jesus Christ and our fellow man and woman as brothers and sisters. The Gallup organization reports that there are over two billion Christians in a world that has over six billion people. Interestingly, the number of Christians has decreased disproportionately as the world population has increased. In fact, according to the Pew Research, although Christianity remains the dominant religion in the U.S., the percentage of Christians is on the decline. While 92 percent of the population claims to believe in God, the percentage of Christians has plummeted five percentage points in the last five years declining from 78 percent to 73 percent from 2007 to 2012.⁶⁰

To reverse the appalling and lamentable aforementioned statistics, it will require not only the clergy to provide the equipping but also for the laity to avail themselves for training, service, maturing in the word of God and assuming their rightful places in the life and work of the church. It is inconceivable that after twenty centuries since the inception of Christianity that there exists in the church, an unrepresentative and inept laity. The battle in the quest for salvation of the world may be stalled. There is much room for improvement if the laity is to assume their rightful places with the clergy; however, as the shepherd knows his sheep, the clergy should know whether or not his laity is inept or knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities. Such awareness and

⁶⁰ *Pew Research Center for People and the Press* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2007-2012).

avenues for growth and development are what distinguishes a growing and thriving ministry from a retrogressing and dying ministry.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter attempts to deconstruct the myth that the burden of the church or Christianity, should be shouldered entirely by the clergy while the laity who makes up 99.5 percent of the body of Christ remains ignorant or mere spectators.¹ However, for the laity to assume their roles and responsibilities in the mission of the church, it requires firstly collaboration and intentional interaction between the clergy and laity and secondly appropriate transmission of knowledge and training primarily provided by the clergy.

Some scholars, such as Kathleen Bliss, have “reached the conclusion that there is no such thing as a theology of the laity alone,”² as both ‘clergy and laity’ are called to service in the koinonia by our various gifts and the whole church is considered priestly or laos—the people of God. Kraemer in his masterpiece literary work, *The Theology of the Laity*, insists that an understanding of the theology of the laity presupposes that “it is relevant to insist that the whole membership of the church is primarily laikos (lay). Not for the sake of giving to the laity an eminent exalted status, but for the sake of starting from the ground which is common to the whole body, that is to say, to be the laos of God.”³

¹ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 72.

² Kathleen Bliss, *We the People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 76.

³ Kendrick Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press), 159.

Despite the arguments of Bliss and Kramer, one can surmise that the *Theology of the Laity* falls squarely under the theological discipline of Ecclesiology or the Doctrine of the Church. As the church was founded by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, one cannot speak about the laity without discussing the Doctrine of Jesus Christ or Christology and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit or Pneumatology. Jesus' life, work and ultimate sacrifice on the cross for our redemption, introduces another discipline in theology called Soteriology. If we heed to the command of the Great Commission, then one encounters the Mission of the Church or Missiology. Therefore, the redemption of the world, or the telos of the church, touches on various theological concepts. Both Bliss and Kramer could be making a salient point in their various approaches to the theology of the laity as the communion, interaction, work and mission of God's people cannot be labeled or assigned to one theological discipline. It encompasses all disciplines or theologies and introduces the eschatological union that we shall experience at the end of human history.

Biblical Insight

One does not have to veer too far from the Bible to encounter the theology of the laity; however, since this is theological and not a biblical foundation paper, just a casual reference will be made to a few passages in the scriptures. Throughout the tapestry of the Bible in both Old and New Testament scriptures, the task of deliverance and/or salvation was supposed to be shouldered by all who were committed to the mission. In the Old Testament Book of Exodus, God initially told Moses to solicit the assistance of his brother Aaron for the mission of delivering the Israelites. As he made excuses such as

having a speech impediment to opt out of the plan, God provided his brother Aaron (Ex 3). To defeat the Amalekites, Moses was assisted by Aaron and Hur who held up his hands on both sides to keep them steady until the sun set (Ex 17). Jethro provided wise council to Moses on the delegation of duties (Ex 18). Theologian and scholar, Father Anaekee emphasized, “The parish ministry cannot be alive without a vibrant laity. Collaborative parish building recognizes Jethro’s advice to Moses (indeed every pastor), to judiciously share the pastoral leadership with the laity for competent and effective dispensation of divine care.”⁴

Melvin Steinbron in his book, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone*, puts it succinctly: “The traditional way of one person trying to minister to all the people is not adequate: you are not able to perform it alone and the thing is too heavy for you.”⁵ In Numbers chapter 11, one encounters Moses again complaining to God that he could not carry all this people alone as the burden was too heavy for him. “How many clergy are like this? Moses’ desperation opened him to hearing God’s plan to choose seventy elders to bear the burden of the people with him that he might not bear it alone.”⁶

The New Testament is also laden with the theological concepts of divine delegation of duties so that the salvific purpose of the mission and vision of the church can be accomplished. “The sending of the seventy other disciples in pairs into the pastoral field by Christ (Lk 10:1-4), envisaged the extent of the work and collaboration required of the laity. The arduous and rich harvest is to be reaped by hard working and

⁴ Father Hyacinth A. Anaekee, *The Laity in Parish Ministry* (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 2010), v.

⁵ Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 42.

⁶ Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone*, 43.

co-responsible laity. For no single hand can conveniently tie a parcel ”⁷ Ephesians 4:11-13 states, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith.” Acts Chapter 6 applied this theology to the fullest when the disciples realized that they were neglecting the salient function of winning souls for Christ by performing the functions that were the gifts of others in the koinonia. The impetus was the building up of the Body of Christ, not the stratification of the ministry that began to take place in the second and third centuries.

The Misunderstood Christian Calling

Both clergy and laity misunderstood the “all are called” cliché or concept. The startling line of demarcation that exists between the ordained and the non-ordained confirms the misunderstood theology of the laity. Called from where and to what one might ask? As a royal priesthood, all Christians are called and ordained at baptism to declare the wonderful deeds of God who called us out of darkness into the light of Christ (1Pt 2:9).⁸ The clergy on their part misunderstood that they needed the laity to accomplish the task of winning souls to Christ while the laity misunderstood that the Christian vocation was not exclusively for the clergy.

Although church hierarchy was rebuffed during the Reformation, seemingly, the church had solidly adopted the hierarchical elements of the secular world, to the point of no return with the clergy occupying the status of the learned or educated’ in the Word

⁷ Anaeeke, *The Laity in Parish Ministry*, v.

⁸ Mary Alice Avram, *The Practical Application of a Theology of the Laity at the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C.* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 1984), 2.

while the non-clergy or laity, was relegated to the ignorant or uneducated in the Word.

Bliss further propounded, "From being defined as those not possessing clerical status, the laity also came to be defined in the Western Church as those who do not possess the professional knowledge of the clergy, that is to say, knowledge of theology."⁹

To paraphrase the words from a favorite hymn, 'We are on the battlefield for the Lord and we promise Him that we will serve Him till we die.' There are certain key words and phrases such as *battlefield*, *promise*, *serving Him unto death* in the hymn that refer to the commitment of all Christians not just laity or clergy. With this analogy, each has been positioned to execute his role with the commitment and dexterity to accomplish the missiological sphere of the ministry which ultimately brings about salvation and reunion with Jesus Christ who instructed and conscripted the twelve apostles and all his followers with the mandate to, go and make disciples of all nations. "Despite their degree and functional differences, they (clergy and laity) remain partakers in the saving mystery of God."¹⁰

Research has shown that except for a few denominations such as the United Methodist Church, the lay or laos in the Christian Church either has been relegated to perfunctory or docile roles or they have not risen to the charge of their calling because they are not excited, prepared or trained in the Word. In lieu of their lack of knowledge, they and the world around them have equated the church with the clergy. Kim Katterheinrich concludes, "A church which is biblically illiterate cannot be a renewed

⁹ Bliss, *We the People*, 66.

¹⁰ Anaekee, *The Laity in Parish Ministry*, v.

and growing church because there are no firm foundations. It is a house built on sand.”¹¹

Whenever, one hears about a church or ministry, besides it being a house where Christians worship God, one of the first references is the name of the Pastor or Senior Pastor. For example, Christians normally introduce their ministries as Mt. Sinai Baptist Church where the Reverend Dr. Alfred Baptist is the Senior Pastor. Normally, no mention is made to the numerical strength of the membership that fills the pews during the worship services or the various ministries and activities led by lay people. One may have to follow up with questions such as: what is the normal attendance during worship services? When are your Sunday school and Bible study classes held? Do you have a Children’s ministry? No mention is normally made of Sister Susie who bakes the cookies for the fellowship hour or Brother Jimmy who performs the janitorial service. The church is normally associated with the pastor or the clergy.

There are valid reasons for this assertion in that most churches and ministries survive or perish based on the vision, preaching, and leadership of the Pastor. From my perspective and experience, in addition to exceptional preaching and teaching (kerygma) skills, a successful ministry also needs a visionary pastor or leader who possesses excellent interpersonal skills. However, it should be noted that a successful pastor needs a number of dedicated and spiritually matured laypersons that possess some God given abilities, skills and talents that can be harnessed for the kingdom of God.

It is inconceivable that at this critical juncture of renewal and rebirth of the church and the need for Christians to interject the message of love for God and mankind, that we

¹¹ Kim L. Katterheinrich, *Spiritual Renewal: The Foundation for A Gift-based Ministry to Continue and Enhance Growth in the Versailles United Church of Christ* (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1988), 53.

miss the opportunity to bring about transformation of the world because of this unresolved problem of the unity of clergy and laity. On the one hand, some scholars contend that the sheer vacuum of theological training between the clergy and laity has contributed to this misunderstood role, while on the other hand; the general apathy and ignorance of the laity have further exacerbated the problem. The laity has become what is referred to as God's frozen people. They are frozen because "many of our laypeople would frankly rather not be called. When they are told that they are ministers and a royal priesthood, they are not only uncomfortable with such language; they do not wish to be committed to such responsibilities."¹²

This resistance to commitment or responsibility primarily stems from the fact that lay people are engrossed in their secular professions and that may sometimes mean deviating from the precepts in the scriptures. To accomplish their tasks for example, of winning a court case (lawyers) or making a handsome profit (businessmen), they may have to conform to the perverted standards of the secular world. They hear the cries from the secular world that "You just can't be a Christian in business" or "You should not mix religion and politics."¹³ With that backdrop, Christians miss the opportunity to lead the world in honesty, integrity, fair play, justice, and a voice for the weak and the disadvantaged. The apathy, perception, and reluctance on the part of the laity have further propelled the clergy to a superior class not envisaged in the scriptures as we are called to service and the "greatest among you, shall be your servant." Because of the clergy's

¹² *All Are Called: Towards a Theology of the Laity* (London, UK: Church House Publishing), 6.

¹³ *All Are Called*, 6.

superior knowledge of the scriptures, the laity has “put the sacred ministry on a pedestal, until they feel that the only way a man can serve God is being ordained.”¹⁴

Realigning the Laity’s Perception

Many factors are contributing to the realignment of the laity’s perception of their roles in the mission and witness of Jesus Christ to the world and in the church. Among them are the realization encapsulated in the words of Pope Pius of the Catholic Church—a clerically driven church that pastors/clergy are realizing that they are unable to be effective if they pretend to unilaterally carry the burdens of their ministry alone. In some protestant churches, the clergy and laity have decided that they need each other in both the ecclesiological as well as the missiological aspects of the salvific purpose of Jesus Christ. The laity on the other hand is becoming cognizant of the situation that the pastor/clergy is unable to provide both the spiritual directive and instruction for the ministry and be expected to wash the dishes, sweep the floor, visit every sit and shut in member, eulogize the dead, comfort the bereaved and visit the prisons.

A reawakening is taking place in the spiritual minds of both the clergy and laity pertaining to the sharing of responsibilities. Theologians and scholars Gibbs and Morton averred, “A great many historical factors have helped to drive God’s people to this new thinking-among them, admittedly, a shortage of clergy (which may be truly providential), but also the growth of secular knowledge and of education for lay people. It was inevitable that the clergy should run the medieval churches, because practically every

¹⁴ *All Are Called*, 6.

educated man was in orders of some kind or another. However, for the last two hundred years, education and leadership have not at all been the monopoly of men in orders and there has at last been a chance for Christian people to work out a satisfactory doctrine of the laity. In the last twenty years, all this has begun to jell together.”¹⁵

Kraemer contends, “There is going on a constant prodding of the laity out of their passivity and their spectator attitude. Efforts towards what are called mobilization of the laity and special training and activating occur in many places.”¹⁶ Pope Pius of the Catholic Church postulated, “The laity are the church; they make the church.”¹⁷

Secondly, some clergy have realized that they can co-opt the services of dedicated and spiritual laymen/women in both performing the mundane and/or administrative functions of the church and exercising the role of lay pastors to a group of ten or twelve church members so that the spiritual, emotional and perhaps the physical needs of the membership are regularly met. What this entails is what can be justifiably labeled the two-fold functions of the laity. Because of their sheer number (Bliss 99.5 percent); one can infer that the laity can be used in two primary roles such as:

1. The Spiritual mundane/administrative functions. These functions include but are not limited to:
 - Board Committee membership such as official, stewardship and finance, building, trustee
 - Benevolence, Food and Clothing ministry, Janitorial services, Receptionist and welcome committees, ushers etc.

¹⁵ Mark Gibbs and T. Ralph Morton, *God's Frozen People* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1965), 13.

¹⁶ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 13.

¹⁷ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 72-73.

2. The Spiritual/pastoral functions. These functions include but are also not limited to:

- Small Group Leaders, Class leaders, Bible Study and Sunday School teachers
- Missionary societies, Sick and shut-in committee, Prison ministry
- Singing in the Choirs, lay leaders and readers, audio and video technicians

Imagine a church or ministry without a cadre of dedicated, spiritual, and loyal members who have made themselves available for service to the Almighty God and to their fellow men. As Stienbron asserts, “All people need to be pastored on a continuing basis. We all have needs. We all need someone praying for us. We all need nurturing and love.”¹⁸ This was basically the concept propounded by John Wesley that prompted him to organize the lay ministry project in Methodism. Additionally, the lay members themselves in many respects are beginning to realize that they are all gifted by God to make their contributions to the mission and witness of the church and are making themselves available for biblical training to carry their share of the burden of the ministry. As evidenced by the interest of the World Council of Churches conferences held at Amsterdam, Netherlands and Evanston, Illinois, Kendrik Kraemer posits, “Everywhere in the world, there is evident in many churches a new outburst of lay-participation and activity, or, at least, a growing concern about it.”¹⁹

Furthermore, Christians both laity and clergy, are becoming anxious about the continued survival of the church in the face of the myriad of challenges it is encountering in the post-modern world such as the gradual decline of the numerical strength of Christians due to aging members, the lack of young families refilling the vacated role and

¹⁸ Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone*, 13.

¹⁹ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 13.

rolls of the aged, the proliferation of other religions, and public scandals of church leaders. However, as we, Christians hasten to find solutions and remedies on how to align the course of the church with its mission and witness; we should be “attentive to the prophetic, working prayerfully to identify the corrective voice of the Spirit in our present age of anxiety.”²⁰

To hasten this realignment, the church must return to the place where it first met Jesus-on the dirt back roads of Galilee in Judea for this connotes a spirit of deep humility on the part of both clergy and laity. It must embrace common men and women who are either spiritually mature or who are disposed to make themselves available for training in the scriptures and service. Our Lord himself selected the twelve Apostles from among the commoners not from among those with Levitical or aristocratic lineage. “In our time again, the church is more emphatically than ever before called to give account of the meaning of the laity for the church and the world”²¹ “The Christian Church started its course through the witness and activity of common men. We may confidently derive from it that many apostles, prophets, teachers; evangelists (Eph 4:11) were lay people. Most of the companions of Paul were dedicated lay-people.”²² Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these common people commenced a ministry of saving souls that has survived for over two thousand years.

²⁰ Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011), 14.

²¹ Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 19.

²² Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity*, 19.

The Right Perspective

Our Lord has already positioned us by his sacred gifts. In the grand endeavor of our service to God and mankind, the clergy and laity should not engage in turf battles. We all are called to service in the vineyard of our creator as the “harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.” If we all put our hands to the plow, both the soteriological and the ecclesiological mission of Christ will be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us on Pentecost and which continues to renew and invigorate us for service. This mission is not about laity or clergy. This is a divine enterprise initiated by our Creator since Adam and Eve broke communion with God. Because of God’s compassion, the Lord looked down upon us with pity and saw the necessity for a reunion, and orchestrated a plan that confounds the best in all of us. Therefore, our redemption from sin and our participation in this miracle of salvation should humble all of us for service before our sovereign Lord.

The assignment of gifts by our Lord should not create a misunderstanding of the functions or the hierarchy of the church. As one who comes from the world of business, and very adverse to anarchy in any organization, proper planning and execution of tasks is sine quo non to any successful organization. Organization and structure are needed to accomplish the mission; however, it should not be misinterpreted for status and honor to the detriment of God’s intention. Theologian and author, Stanley Grenz asserts in his book: *Theology for the Community of God* “Beginning in the apostolic era, the people of God have continually known the importance of organization for the purpose of facilitating the ministry given by Christ.”²³ Daniel L. Migliore in his book: *Faith Seeking*

²³ Stanley A. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 549.

Understanding, posits, “Order is certainly important in the life of the church. Polity does matter. The question is whether or not the principles of church order are consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ and whether they support rather than suffocate the freedom and the gifts of the Spirit to all the people of God.”²⁴

The clergy or pastor is called and entrusted with the role of shepherding or leading the flock. Their vocation, training, ordination, and commitment to the guidance of the Holy Spirit avail them with a gift to pastor or shepherd. Migliore narrates that by “the priesthood of all believers; all Christians are called to ministry and are empowered for this task by the Holy Spirit. But there is also a particular meaning of the term Christian Ministry. Among the gifts of the Spirit to the church is the calling and ordination of certain people to the ministry of the Word and sacrament. Ministry in this sense is an office that is ordained by God to provide for regular and responsible preaching of the gospel, celebration of the sacraments and leadership in the life and service of the church. So crucial are these activities to the life and well-being of the community of faith that they are not left to chance occurrence or haphazard preparation. In every time and place, the church needs leaders who are qualified to preach, teach, administer the sacraments, and offer guidance in Christian faith and life.”²⁵

Regardless of the administrative mode that a church or ministry uses to transmit the Word of God and minister to its members, it must be based on the premise that all (clergy and laity) are called to serve God as Jesus said “He came to serve rather than be served, and he commanded his disciples to exercise authority differently from those who

²⁴ Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 297.

²⁵ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 299.

lord over others” (Mk 10:42-45). “The purpose of every ministry is to build up the whole people of God in faith, hope, and love for more effective service in the world. All church order and church offices must therefore be tested continuously by the criterion of whether a particular way in which the church’s life is ordered in fact helps the whole church to take part in this ministry.”²⁶

As the clergy is normally versed in the Word and sensitive to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is incumbent on them to harness the gifts, talents and skills of the laity and provide the necessary equipping so that together with the clergy, they can utilize their gifts for the building up of the whole people of God. As these lay people mature in the Word and assume their rightful positions in the service of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, they will begin to equip other believers for service either directly or indirectly. Their Christian walk, talk, and attitude will exude the contagion that will infect and affect others to put their hands to the plow. In addition, these equipped and revived Christians will come to the realization that their pastors cannot do it alone and that they will need all the assistance, support and prayer of the entire membership. Pastors are not superhuman. Inasmuch as they have availed themselves to be utilized by God for His service, we must be reminded of the words of theologian Karl Rahner, “The terrible and happy truth is that ministers are often weak as well as occasionally strong: they too live in fear of trembling; they too cry, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief” and “Lord be merciful to me, a sinner. Nevertheless, they preach the gospel that transforms the world.”²⁷

²⁶ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 298.

²⁷ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 297.

Conclusion

The various gifts of the Spirit were intended for the work of the church and the building up the body of Christ, in an effort to connect others to the salvific grace of Jesus Christ. The Christian journey is analogous to a spiritual warfare, and unless the clergy and the laity understand their proper roles in this scenario, the combat will be stalled. In this spiritual warfare, God has strategically and divinely positioned his people. The clergy is analogous to the commanders/generals who lead the battle. They are entrusted with the vision, mission, training, equipping, strategizing, and assigning the roles of the laity. The laity is analogous to the troops.

Although the troops outnumber the commanders/generals, they take commands and direction from them so that they can accomplish their mission. This is a hands-in-glove relationship as one is highly dependent on the other. Just as the commanders/generals cannot attempt any battle without trained and committed troops, the clergy/pastors cannot accomplish the mission of winning souls for the Lord without a spiritually equipped laity. In our Christian context, our mission is to win souls for Christ. For us to accomplish the mission, we need a trained and committed laity who have dedicated themselves to prayer and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the boots on the ground assisting the clergy in devouring the enemy.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will explore some of the theories, models, and applications for equipping and/or training the laity to assume their rightful roles and responsibilities in the mission of the church. In this discussion and for simplification, the ‘clergy’ are those who are ‘ordained’ or ‘set apart’ and the ‘laity’ are defined as all other Christians. Christian believers—both clergy and laity are to reckon that an uninformed or untrained laity hinders the gospel message for making disciples. However, the realization of the both the clergy and laity for the mission of the ‘frozen people of God,’ will primarily be the work of the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, the community of believers must approach the mission of Christ and the church with due diligence in recruiting (evangelizing), equipping (training), retaining (incentivizing) and promoting (spiritual maturity) of the whole people of God.

The activities mentioned supra, are basically the same mode of operation that secular organizations and disciplines utilize to attract and retain personnel for the desired outcome of enhancing the image of the organization or to maximize results. The difference from the modes of the secular world is that the church is empowered primarily by the Holy Spirit. God’s people need spiritual empowerment. Ronald McHattee in his doctoral thesis at Fuller Theological Seminary avers that, “the most critical ingredient

that needs to be addressed in the church today is that of spiritual empowerment... mainline churches of Western civilization continue to decline because of their continued reliance on human resourcefulness without spiritual empowerment.”¹ The church must be the place where the Holy Spirit is present and attracts people. It should not only adopt the market driven approach that emphasizes growth in membership without spiritual empowerment.

Equipping the laity is a bottom-up and collective phenomenon. The clergy must realize that ‘they cannot do it alone.’ In order to accomplish this all-important task, both clergy and laity must face the issues and challenges to a ministry because of an uninformed laity. “The clergy and the laity must see each other as collaborators in the Lord’s vineyard.”² “So within the family of believers, we have the clergy and the laity sharing in the same mission of the church, but each in a manner specific to its state.”³ Nonetheless, this sharing of responsibilities in the mission of the church becomes impossible without conscientious recruiting (evangelizing), proper and transformative training (equipping) and effective delegation of duties.

Christians cannot assume that the church’s pews will be filled by osmosis. It requires similar due diligence of recruitment employed by the military, business organizations, and educational institutions. In the process, we have to convince new converts of the advantages of belonging or joining our ministries. In our Christian

¹ Ronald Luther McHattee, *A Strategy for Renewal and Growth through the Spiritual Empowerment of the Laity* (Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 1989), v.

² *A Bountiful Harvest*, edited by Chiegboka, Okodo, Umezina, Umeanolue (Anambra, Nigeria: Rex Charles and Patrick Ltd., 2012), 221.

³ *A Bountiful Harvest*, 222.

parlance, it is called Evangelism. New converts need transformative training or nurturing in the Word of God comparable to the regimentation of the military or the indoctrination of the business world. This is not a perchance enterprise. Just as a newborn has to be trained to talk, walk, and behave, converts new to the faith have to be trained to perform similar tasks. We should refrain from what Sally Morgenthaler refers to as the 'seeker driven' model which is very market driven and business oriented but is void of a "spiritual" feel.⁴

The recruiting, training and retaining process has to be intentional in order to produce the transformative results of well-equipped and dedicated workers in the vineyard of Christ. "Christ did not leave His work to chance. He spelled out the details. He did not even imply that His people would not go: hence the command, "As you go, disciple all nations." They were to go purposefully and teach men of Christ and lead them to an open declaration of allegiance to Him. Then once they came to a saving knowledge of Christ and were publicly initiated with His cause on earth, they were to be trained and equipped for service in the church."⁵

The Responsibility of the Church

Hollis L. Green opines, "The task of church leadership is simply one of equipping the saints for an effective ministry. It is obvious from the scripture that every believer is

⁴ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism- Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 77.

⁵ *A Bountiful Harvest*, 221.

either in the process of being equipped himself, equipping others, or perhaps both.”⁶

Green further contends that “the church has two major emphases: evangelism and education. This is significantly brought out in the Commission. The resurrection completed the work of redemption and Pentecost thrust a band of Spirit-anointed witnesses into the world for service. The next thing on God’s calendar is the consummation of the age. Meanwhile, what is the interim responsibility of the church? It is the responsibility of Christians through the agency of the Holy Spirit to reach and teach all nations concerning the saving grace of Christ during the interim period.”⁷

One can conclude then that for the ‘All are Called Principle’ to produce practical or tangible results, evangelism and education have to take place. Green’s two major emphases of the church seem to be in order. Firstly, evangelism, which is analogous to recruitment in other disciplines or professions, occurs which is followed by education (training/equipping). The process of training results in people discovering their God-given skills, talents, and abilities. The discovery of one’s strength translates into service, in a useful ministry of the church. It concretizes Ephesians 4:11 “Because all who are called by God to the church are set aside for ministry.” No gift is of greater or lesser value. Each member is responsible to God and to the body for the use of her/his gifts for the building up of the people of God and for mission. Clergy/laity differentiation is nonexistent in the Church of Jesus Christ. All are the laos, the people of God called to ministry in Christ. The Church of the Savior understands the New Testament instruction

⁶ Hollis Green, *Why Churches Die: A Guide to Basic Evangelism and Church Growth* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972), 65.

⁷ Green, *Why Churches Die*, 20.

to teach that gifts and responsibilities differ within the Body, but that there is mutuality of ministry in the Church.”⁸

Willard A. Pleuthner in his book, *Building Up Your Congregation* avers that “people today more than ever before, need the teachings of Jesus Christ. They are faced with problems-gigantic, complex, and world-wide—which can only be solved through a Christian approach and an adherence to Christian principles.”⁹ He, however, reckoned with the challenge of attracting people to the church, as the incentives such as the ones offered by business and the recognition accorded military personnel are different. He concluded, “Today’s problem of converting more people to the Christian way of life is history’s greatest challenge to the Church.”¹⁰ Although the challenges seem insurmountable at times as the rewards are not self-evident, he cautioned the clergy that their “basic objective is the spiritual quality of the congregation.”¹¹

Pleuthner suggests that the church cannot train or equip if it has not done a good job in evangelism or recruitment. Churches or ministries cannot assume that the 99.5 percent of Christians according to Bliss will be available for training.¹² Therefore, churches must assess from time to time the reasons the 99.5 percent are not available for training and active involvement in the life of the church. He mentioned several obstacles that most ministries and churches ignore:

⁸ Mary Alice Avram, *The Practical Application of a Theology of the Laity at the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C.* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 1984), 87.

⁹ Willard A. Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation: Help from Tested Business Models* (Greenwich: CT: Seabury Press), 3.

¹⁰ Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation*, 3.

¹¹ Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation*, 3.

¹² Kathleen Bliss, *We the People* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1964), 76.

1. Churches should not be interested in mere growth in membership. Churches should not cater to the 'popular appeal' at the expense of deep spiritual growth.
2. Churches should ask the question; "why people get out of the habit of attending church?" He responded by drawing conclusion from the world of business. He postulated that successful businesses learn to avoid losing customers by finding out why customers stop buying. Then they correct the adverse conditions. Churches can use the same techniques to stop losing members or losing the regular church attendance of members.
3. Dangerous Dignity of Church Boards- Is your board's dignity dwarfing your church's progress? One reason for the dignity of many church boards is found in its membership. On the boards of urban churches there are often too many bankers, lawyers, doctors, and retired businessmen, and too few sales managers, advertising salesmen and active business executives on the way up the ladder of success. As a result, there is little aggressive salesmanship thinking to "season" the conservatism of men who must be conservative to succeed in their non-selling professions. Yet today, our churches need aggressive selling leadership more than any other organization in the world.
4. Self-perpetuating membership of the church's boards- an inner clique stays in power continuously. A few leading families monopolize the officerships. He cautioned that a certain degree of continuity in trusteeship is a good thing. However, to be truly democratic, he recommended that members should be elected for three or four year terms.
5. "No Labor representation" or a "one class institution"- one of the best places for management and labor to get to know and trust each other is on a church board. Any member who belongs to that group brings to the board the benefits of "Labor's" viewpoint."¹³

Rhetorically he struggled with the question, "What's wrong with the successful bankers; competent lawyers, and professional men, and why are they responsible for the church's dangerous dignity? The answer is obvious. Most of these board members achieved their success by having people come to them for help and not going out and selling their services to people who needed them. Today, most churches cannot grow unless they stop waiting for people to come to them. They must take a more progressive

¹³ Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation*, 5-6.

attitude in getting new members and increasing church attendance. Churches should go out and sell their exclusive God-given advantages to the general public. The church has more happiness, more peace, and contentment, more joy and satisfaction to offer than merchandise or service advertised in full-color pages in national magazines. Yet the average church shuns most of those successful forms of planning, selling, and advertising, which make business grow bigger year by year. They are classified as “undignified by the conservative church’s board.”¹⁴

Some Practical Models for Equipping the Laity

Observations and experience have demonstrated that involving the laity is no ‘walk in the park’ as it involves the experimentation of several approaches. One of the earliest models was the Methodist’s Class Leader System. Wesley’s utilization of ordinary lay people as ‘class leaders’ was an effective tool in keeping the church, or the body of Christ, connected in the vision and mission of the church. Each class leader was appointed from among the laity to provide leadership for a group of about twelve persons to ensure that the membership who lived in the same locality met once a week and was informed of each other’s challenges, wellbeing and spiritual growth. In the process, the ministers were informed of those for example who were sick, backsliding or had left the fellowship.

James L. Garlow states: “His most outstanding contribution to Christianity was probably not in the things we commonly associate with Wesley. Rather, it was his

¹⁴ Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation*, 6-7.

extensive training and utilization of the laity for meaningful, systematic, and consistent ministry. British Methodism would not have existed without its extensive utilization of the laity.”¹⁵ “Wesley’s view of what was fundamental in ministering the gospel was not applicable only to the ordained in the Church of England or to his own traveling preachers. Wesleyan lay office-bearers properly claimed a share of the responsibility for it and this was reflected in the rapid proliferation of Methodist societies.”¹⁶

Other tried and tested models include Rick Warren’s model of the Purpose Driven Church. In this model, Warren conveys that every ministry has to define its target. “The practice of targeting specific kinds of people for evangelism is a biblical principle for ministry. It is as old as the New Testament. Jesus targeted his ministry. Was Jesus being unfair or prejudiced? Certainly not! Jesus targeted his ministry to be effective, not to be exclusive. Jesus also instructed the disciples to target their ministry (Mt 10: 5-6). Paul targeted his ministry to Gentiles and Peter targeted his ministry to Jews (Gal 2:7)”¹⁷ “Targeting for evangelism begins with finding out all you can about your community. Your church needs to define its target in four specific ways: geographically, demographically, culturally, and spiritually.”¹⁸ He indicated that this “one factor helped

¹⁵ James L. Garlow, *Partners in Ministry: Laity and Pastors Working Together* (Kansas MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1981), 72.

¹⁶ Margaret Batty, *Stages in the Development and Control of Wesleyan Lay Leadership 1791-1878* (Peterborough, ND: Methodist Publishing House 1988).

¹⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 158.

¹⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* 27.

shaped their strategy of reaching, retaining, and growing believers in Christ. It kept their focus on people and a culture to embrace change.”¹⁹

The next aspect in Warren’s model is that churches need to be driven by a purpose and a process. He alludes that “nothing precedes purpose.” The starting point of every ministry should be the question, “Why do we exist? Until you know what your church exists for, you have no foundation, no motivation, and no direction for ministry. Strong churches are built on purpose! By focusing equally on all five of the New Testament purposes of the church, your church will develop the healthy balance that makes lasting growth possible. Plans, programs, and personalities do not last. But God’s purposes will last.”²⁰ Warren advised that ‘if an existing church has plateaued, is declining, or is simply discouraged, your most important task is to redefine your purpose as nothing else will revitalize a discouraged church faster than rediscovering its purpose.’²¹

Thirdly, Warren emphasized what he termed as “A Great Commitment to the Great Commission.” He postulated, “If an activity or program fulfills one of these commands, they do it. If it does not, they do not. They are driven by the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.” Their commitment to that principle puts things in the right perspective as “they give them the primary tasks the church is to focus on until Christ returns.”²²

¹⁹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 80.

²⁰ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 81.

²¹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 81.

²² Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 103.

He also emphasized that the church should be committed to fulfilling all five tasks that Christ ordained for the church, which included:

- a) Love the Lord with your all your heart which means to worship him
- b) Love your neighbor as yourself which is doing ministry
- c) Go and make disciple/Evangelism. “It is every Christian’s responsibility to share the Good News wherever we go. Jesus commissions us to go and tell the world the message of salvation. As long as there is one person in the world who does not know Christ, the church has a mandate to keep growing.”²³
- d) Baptizing them- there are three participle verbs in the great Commission: *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*. Each of these is a part of the command to “make disciples.” When new believers are baptized, we welcome them in the fellowship of the family of God. We are not alone. We have each other for support.”²⁴
- e) Teaching them to obey—the word that is commonly use is discipleship. The church exists to edify, or to educate God’s people. As the church, we are called not only to reach people but to also teach them. It is the church’s responsibility to develop people to spiritual maturity. This is God’s will for every believer. Paul writes, “... so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:12b-13).²⁵

He concluded his explanation regarding the growth of his ministry by recommending that “instead of trying to grow a church with programs, focus on growing people with a process—the process for implementing the purposes of God involves four steps: bring them in, build them up, train them, and send them out. We bring them in as members, we build them up to maturity, we train them for ministry; and we send them

²³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 105.

²⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 105.

²⁵ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 106.

out for mission, magnifying the Lord in the process.”²⁶ He constantly stressed the need for every church to define its purposes and carefully contemplate the processes to achieve their goals. In drawing a similarity with the business world, he stated that the church is in the “disciple-development” business, and that our product is changed lives—Christ-like people.”²⁷

At his Saddleback Church, he stresses several methods or processes that are employed in equipping their members. He stratified the membership into five groups and juxtaposed them with their spiritual maturity and degree of commitment to the ministry. For example, he juxtaposed the unchurched with the community; regular attenders with the crowd; members with congregation; maturing members with the committed and lay ministers with the core. This stratification was necessary so that each group could be provided the necessary spiritual support that would move them to the next level of maturity and commitment.

The crowd could be those who are ‘unchurched’ even though they may be believers. He further expressed that bringing them in symbolizes extracting the ‘crowd’ from the ‘community.’ “A crowd is not a church. But to grow a larger church, you must first attract a crowd. He cautioned the church to be sensitive to fears of the crowd, particularly the first time visitors. For example, first time visitors should not be asked to stand up and give their names in church. “We don’t realize that when we do this, the visitor is dying a thousand deaths in his mind.”²⁸

²⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 108-109.

²⁷ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 109.

²⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 260.

The crowd must be moved to full membership by a process of assimilation, through both the attitude and warmth of the pastor and existing members. The church's attitude will answer such questions to the prospective members as, "Do I fit here? This is the question of acceptance. Does anybody want to know me? This is a question of friendship. Am I needed here? This is a question of value. What is the advantage of joining? This is a question of benefit? What is required of members? This is a question of expectations."²⁹

Warren recommends establishing a Required Membership Class because "it is the most important class in a church as it sets the tone and expectation level for everything that follows... note that a *strong* class doesn't have to be a long class.... The strength should be determined by its content and call to commitment, not its length."³⁰ He believed that "the senior pastor should teach this class, or a portion of it for it provides the new members the opportunity and importance to see the pastor's vision for the church, feel his love for the members, and hear his personal commitment to care, feed, and lead them."³¹

Buttressing John Wesley's small group or class system to keep the church connected, Warren also stressed as your church grows 'every member should join a small group'. "Affinity groups can provide the personal care and attention every member deserves, no matter how big the church becomes."³² "Small groups are the most effective way of closing the back door of your church. We never worry about losing people who

²⁹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 312.

³⁰ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 315.

³¹ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 316.

³² Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 327.

are connected to a small group. We know that those people have been effectively assimilated.”³³

The next item on a church’s agenda after the new members have become connected in the fellowship is their Spiritual Maturity. “The New Testament is very clear that God’s will for every believer is spiritual maturity. He wants us to grow up.... The ultimate goal of spiritual growth is to become like Jesus. God’s plan for us since the beginning has been for us to be like Jesus.”³⁴ Warren warned that this development process is not the work of the pastor or clergy alone; it requires commitment from the members. “Spiritual growth is intentional. A person must want to grow, decide to grow, and make an effort to grow...without a commitment to grow; any growth that occurs will be circumstantial, rather than intentional. Spiritual growth is too important to be left to circumstance.”³⁵

At Saddleback, they developed “The Life Development Process” diagram—the task of equipping people with the habits necessary for spiritual maturity which is called “getting people to second base.” This life development process is more like a marathon than a sprint. “It takes time just as God allowed Joshua and the Israelites to possess the land little by little (Dt 7:22), he uses a gradual process of change to develop us into the image of Christ. There are no shortcuts to maturity. It is a slow process.”³⁶

The Life Development Process at Saddleback is not limited to the biblical knowledge alone; it includes the transformation of one’s behavior. “Biblical knowledge is

³³ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 327.

³⁴ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 331.

³⁵ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 333.

³⁶ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 335.

just one measurement of spiritual growth. In addition, we can measure maturity through perspective, conviction, skills, and character. “These Five Levels of Learning” are the building blocks of spiritual growth at Saddleback.” Warren emphasized that Saddleback wants all members to attain spiritual maturity as a milestone. He warns, “Knowledge must be tempered with character as knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Cor 8:10).” “It is our fruit, not knowledge that demonstrates a person’s maturity. If we do not put into practice what we know, we foolishly “build a house on sand.”³⁷ Drawing on the analogy of a baseball diamond as a milestone, they want every member to score at the end of each inning. “For that reason, they have a staff pastor at each of the bases: membership, maturity, ministry and mission. Each pastor serves as a “base coach”—someone who helps the runners make it to the next base.”³⁸

Other functional and practical approaches include for instance, the approach that is used at the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. According to Mary Alice Avram in her thesis: “The Practical Application of the Laity at The Church of the Savior,” she observed and noted that the reasons the church’s model of equipping the saints for ministry was successful, are because of the following:

1. Requirements for Membership—this includes a commitment to Christ and to membership in His Body. The emphasis is “a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, saying yes to His call to membership, and being faithful to one’s call in Christ.” One has to commit to the church’s four disciplines such as a set time for prayer each day, daily scripture reading, weekly worship, and proportionate giving of one’s gross income beginning at the tithe.
2. Assignment of a Sponsor for the New Member—“The sponsor carefully works with the aspiring member to be sure that he/she understands the importance and meaning of total commitment to Christ; the Church,

³⁷ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 337.

³⁸ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 336.

community, mission and ecumenicity; and the specific responsibilities of a member of this church. The sponsor could also be empowered to write periodic letters of evaluation of the member's spiritual growth.

3. Annual Review of One's Commitment which includes assessment of ideas and loyalties to the church, verifying service in a mission group, board, council and giving of finances.
4. Christian Education- Each new member is required to complete five courses in the School of Christian Living, which is sponsored by the church. These courses include Old Testament, New Testament, Christian Ethics, Christian Growth and Christian Doctrine. Each member is also required to read the book '*Call to Commitment and Journey Inward, Journey Outward*' by Elizabeth O'Connor.
5. Mission Group—Because the church is a laos, members are required to be part of this group which promotes community and close spiritual association. The mission groups comprise the total membership of the church. Therefore, no one is left out or isolated. It is a way of life, which requires the members to be accountable to Christ and to each other for the totality of their lives and to share unlimited liability for one another within the groups. One can change mission groups but to drop out of a mission group is to drop out of membership in the church, although one may remain in the fellowship.
6. Mission—The church makes reaching out to the world at large one of its primary responsibilities. It has adopted the posture that the church is the body of Christ and it exists both as an end in itself and to lose its life for the redemption of humankind. To be a member of the Church, the body of Christ, is to be on mission in the world. The church concedes that it struggles with the practical aspect of outside mission to the world as it directly impacts 'their theology of the laity.'
7. Leadership—As the laity is the church, all members must be prepared to use their calling and gifts in the church's ministries.³⁹

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Training and Equipping

Despite the importance attached to education and training, one cannot minimize the sociological impact on a ministry. For instance, pastors and other influential laymen

³⁹ Mary Alice Avram, *The Practical Application of a Theology of the Laity at the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C.* (Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 1984), 91.

exude other attributes that may indirectly instruct other members of the church or ministry. Author Sandra L. Barnes argues in her book, *The Black Megachurch Culture-Models for Education and Culture* that pastors of large mega churches have engendered other sociological issues or pursued a social/humanitarian cause to empower, captivate, and activate the laity to assume a greater part of the ministry of the church. Some of these social issues may incorporate “programmatic efforts that often include a social justice component; personal capacity building; strategic alliances; instrumental and expressive responses to short and long term challenges; and systematic, formulaic instructions on how to experience upward mobility. Despite diverse church goals, the broad objective is to establish, reinforce, and codify the relationship between godly, victorious living, self-efficacy, and intra-church connectedness.”⁴⁰

The pastor of a large church can motivate his congregants under “his deft guidance to create spiritually driven management teams that often rival those found in large corporations.”⁴¹ John R. Mott in his book, *Liberating the Lay Forces*, contends, “It takes laymen to win laymen. This is the principle that like can best reach like. Men who are thinking and doing the same things can most thoroughly understand one another... And out of that likeness grows a more perfect sympathy.”⁴²

In supporting the significance of lay education, D. A. Thangsmay of the United Theological College in Bangalore, India stressed in the book, *The Laity Education and*

⁴⁰ Sandra L. Barnes, *Black Megachurch Culture* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 157.

⁴¹ Barnes, *Black Megachurch Culture*, 69.

⁴² John R. Mott, *Liberating the Lay Forces* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1932), 95-96.

the Theological Colleges, “In the same way as a minimum standard of general education is necessary for all men to live meaningful lives and deal with the situations they have to confront in the world, a minimum of Christian education has to be given to all members of the Church if they are to acquit themselves creditably as Christians in this world. Just as various levels of general or professional education are imparted to those who must cope with problems and responsibilities of varying degrees of importance, different standards of Christian education have also to be given Christians according to the demands that will be made of them by the nature of their vocations. The principles of sound general education are also applicable to the people as Christians. Christian education of the laity—again like ordinary education—would include the training of the will and the emotions and the forming of character.”⁴³

He further emphasized that the clergy must understand the grade level of their parishioners just like the educators do. In the curriculum, they must be careful not to be utterly concerned about “cramming Bible verses as this inhibits thinking, original search for knowledge and any desire to make knowledge a part of experience.”⁴⁴ According to Rick Warren, this sort of learning or lack thereof does not and cannot measure maturity in the believer as knowledge of scripture does not necessarily translate to transformed lives. One can speak with the ‘tongues of angels’ and still be a ‘baby Christian’ if his/her life does not evidence the fruits of the spirit. Scholars such as V. T. Kurien and R. Roye Paye

⁴³ David P. Wilcox and W. A. Kelly, *Laity Education and the Theological Colleges* (Bangalore, India: The C. L. S. Press 1968), 13-14.

⁴⁴ Wilcox and Kelly, *Laity Education and the Theological Colleges*, 16.

advised the importance of “the broadening of the traditional theological curriculum”⁴⁵ as seminaries do not generally offer courses in the training of the laity.

In support of developing fellow co-workers, authors Bill C. Loving and Emery Reber Casstevens are convinced, “The growth of people like the growth of plants, are influenced by environment. A plant’s growth depends on how favorable and stimulating the climate is; the richness of the soil and the nature of its cultivation. A person’s growth depends on the extent to which favorable and stimulating attitudes are present in the workplace; the richness of the knowledge, abilities and understanding of the coach and the nature of the experiences he is exposed to.”⁴⁶ They also compared the coach/manager to a gardener. This assertion is similar to Jesus’ agrarian inferences as he explained his numerous parables.

James M. Hunt and Joseph R. Weintraub in the bestselling management book *The Coaching Manager-Developing Top Talent in Business* alludes to the critical and conclusive results of training in this manner, “Take time to hire properly. Look for those who want to contribute to the kinds of work your team or organization is charged with completing. Then—and this is the step that is too often overlooked by practicing manager—help them improve their performance, yes, but more important grow as workers and as individuals. They will thank you for it, and your organization will be more successful. If you are a business to put it bluntly, you might make money. If you are part

⁴⁵ Wilcox and Kelly, *Laity Education and the Theological Colleges*, 41.

⁴⁶ Bill C. Loving and Emery Reber Casstevens, *Coaching, Learning and Action* (American Management Association, Inc., 1971), 3-4.

of a mission-driven organization, such as a hospital, your people will do a better job of providing service. You'll feel better about your work, at least in most cases."⁴⁷

Conclusion

There are tremendous benefits that can accrue to the church and its pastor when the laity is equipped and trained. The 'multiplier effect' as the economists termed it, becomes enormous to the ministry. Melvin Steinbron calls it 'the payoff' as he developed a model for College Hill Presbyterian Church (CHPC) in Cincinnati, Ohio. It includes:

1. An exhilarating sense of doing things God's way
2. An increasing impact on ministry- touching more people more deeply by multiplication rather than addition
3. A lessening weight of the ministry- it now rests on many shoulders rather than on mine alone. God never intended that I have all the gifts needed by his people. Scripture clearly teaches that every Christian is gifted. Releasing those gifts spreads the caring responsibility across the congregation and reduces my load
4. A continuing spiritual growth. Since we equip more by what we are than by what we teach, the process of equipping others impacts me, calling me to greater accountability and dependence upon God
5. A reduced danger of burn-out and family alienation. Sharing the pastoring provided more time to be with family without neglecting people, more time to be human and to lead a more balanced life.⁴⁸

As we adopt and inculcate the various models and theories of recruiting and training, John R. Mott avers, "There is no other which he would bracket with it in point

⁴⁷ James M. Hunt and Joseph R. Weintraub, *The Coaching Manager-Developing Top Talent in Business* (Thousand Oaks: CA, Sage Publications, Inc., 2011), xi.

⁴⁸ Melvin J. Steinbron, *Can the Pastor Do It Alone* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1987), 24.

of value, is the study of Jesus Christ, our pattern in recruiting and training. It will be remembered that those whom Christ trained were largely, if not entirely, laymen.”⁴⁹

Stanley J. Grenz adds to this conversation by asserting “that regardless of what organizational model we utilize, we must keep uppermost in our minds that the goal of church government is to facilitate the whole people of God in discerning and discharging the Lord’s will... Our goal is to embody and advance the program of God until our Lord returns.”⁵⁰

God’s deliverance of his people has always been a priority as we have seen throughout several generations up to the point of sending Jesus to redeem us from sin and damnation. In the process, the Lord has provided shepherds and pastors to lead humankind from the bondage of slavery in Egypt and the bondage of sin to eternal life with God forever. However, for the salvific plan to succeed here on earth, it requires all Christians to be involved. This is not the work of the clergy alone. The laity has to avail themselves to assist the pastors in fulfilling this mission.

Christianity is a participatory rather than a spectator religion. Its teachings beckon Christians to be available and participate so that they can impact and transform the world. As previously mentioned, although Christianity remains the dominant religion in the U.S., the percentage of Christians is on the decline primarily attributable to Christians leaving the brunt of the Christian mission to the clergy. Christians have to intentionally

⁴⁹ John R. Mott, *Liberating the Lay Forces* (New York, NY: The MacMillan Company, 1932), 102.

⁵⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2000), 570.

reverse or more realistically minimize the '80 percent-20 percent' malaise that is affecting most of our churches.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This project was launched to develop a replicable model that will increase involvement of inactive members in the various ministries of the church. The goal is to address the issue of inactivity or inertia among the majority of the members at Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia. The results from the study are expected to assist churches, as it has been observed that most church members fall in the inactive population. The proverbial 20 percent of the people does 80 percent of the work while the majority does nothing has taken hold.¹ With a membership of approximately 6000, there is a need for a higher percentage of dedicated, committed, and equipped laity to assist with the challenges and burdens of a large congregation. There is a growing need for both the clergy and existing committed laity to incorporate and expand the pool of committed laity from the potential that lies in the uncommitted members. This will assist in the church fulfilling both its mission of connecting persons to the saving grace of Jesus and the tenets of the Great Commission, which is to continually make new disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The defining problem for consideration is that the church has experienced phenomenal growth over the last twenty years. During that period, numerous lay members rose to the task of assisting the pastors/clergy with the challenges that come

¹ Thumma and Bird, *The Other 80 percent*.

with church growth. However, as the membership increased, the percentage of dedicated and/or equipped laity shrank in portion to the membership. It has now become necessary to reinvigorate and equip the vast pool of the membership. They can be described as those who are on the periphery. Although the church has several vibrant avenues/programs such as New Member Class, the S.H.A.P.E.² class, Church-at-Study and approximately 100 different ministries, the issue is how to design a project to assist the church in harnessing or transforming that large segment of the membership into productive and contributing members.

The proposed hypothesis is: if the inactive members are adequately equipped/trained and involved in the church's ministries, then they will feel empowered and contribute their time, talent and resources to the ministry. Thumma and Bird argue in the book, *The Other 80 percent*, "Your church's spectators should be turned into active participants. The marginally involved members of a church should be viewed as a mission field."³ The expected results from the model are to make the inactive members feel that they are welcome and can play a vital role in the ministry.

As in any large organization, one can easily get lost in a crowd. New members and the inactive majority need direction on how to move from the crowd to the core⁴ in order for them to reach their full potential in Christ and make meaningful contributions to the demands of the ministry. An effective and intentional assessment may help the vast majority of inactive members understand the direction, purpose, goal, vision, and mission

² S.H.A.P.E.: *Spirit Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experiences*. This class assists one in discovering God's unique purpose for one's life based on the way God has shaped you.

³ Thumma and Bird, *The Other 80 percent*.

⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 162.

for the church and for themselves. This project required not only the assistance of the Senior Pastor, but the congregation at large, peer associates and context associates at Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia.

Methodology

To facilitate this project, a qualitative research methodology was employed to address the ‘what’ and ‘how’, and included the open-ended questions that are characteristic of a qualitative research methodology. Since the solution centers on a ‘how’ rather than a ‘how much’ question, the research method chosen was qualitative as Creswell states that qualitative research asks “what” or “how.”⁵ Cheshire defines qualitative research as ‘naturalistic, nothing predetermined, subjective, discovery, descriptive, inductive, holistic, focuses on reflection and experience, examines subject in-depth, uses no manipulation, based on understanding and meaning, model comes from anthropology and sociology (ethnographic and field studies), and phenomenology is a theoretical perspective.’⁶

In contemplating the issue of nonparticipation of a large segment of the membership in the various ministries of the church, numerous what and how questions came to mind. For example:

- What is preventing many members in the church from actively participating in the over 100 ministries?
- What is causing or hampering over 4000 members of a 6000 member congregation from attending Sunday worship services?

⁵ John W. Creswell, *Research Design* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2003), 106.

⁶ Barbara W. Cheshire, *The Best Dissertation is a Finished Dissertation* (Portland, OR: National Book Company, 1993), 24.

- What should the church do to assist Bro Joe or Sue who is stretched too thin as a member of a board, the choir, a commission, while others are just sitting around?
- What is causing the membership roll to plateau at approximately 6,000 when the senior pastor reports annual accretion to the membership list of about 400?
- How can the church get most of its members to attend Bible study on Wednesday evenings?
- How can we attract and equip the vast majority of the membership to become committed and dedicated members?

The proposed methods to test the hypothesis were as follows: pre and post questionnaires, four Bible study series, two workshops on stewardship and introduction to the church's ministries followed by eight focus group discussions and ten Interviews with inactive members. The pre and post questionnaires were designed to verify the comprehension of the relevance that all Christians are called to serve. The Bible study series consisted of four parts that centered on God's calling of all Christians by giving us all special gifts to serve, God's Divine Staffing Plan, Advantages and Responsibilities of Membership, and God's Requirements of us as stewards. The workshops introduced the various avenues available for service and stewardship. It was the intention that the Focus Group understands the biblical and theological underpinnings of the calling of all Christians, not only the clergy, as is generally misunderstood. After each instruction and presentation, the Focus Group was asked some pointed questions, and provided candid feedback that supported not only their understanding but also possible solutions to the impediments that prevented them from serving. Several inactive members were identified and were interviewed to ascertain and corroborate the results of the pre/post questionnaires. These members prefer to remain anonymous. The results from these exchanges and interactive sessions were carefully evaluated and recommendations were

made to adopt a replicable model that attracts and involves most of the members into active participation in the church.

Project Calendar

The timeline that facilitated the effective execution and completion of the research project is as follows:

- November 11th—Meet with the context associates to give them an overview of the dates, expectations during the interviews, how to compile the information gathered from the interviews, confidentiality, their dates of availability for the inventory and questionnaire
- November 12th-19th—Work on developing and selecting the questions for the pre/post questionnaires/surveys
- January 11th—Pastor makes appeal for Focus Group Participation
- January 13th—Meet and greet with the focus group and the context associates. Introduction of the context associates and their responsibilities during this project to the focus group
- January 13th—Distribute Pre Questionnaires
- January 13—February 3rd- Bible Study Sessions and Discussions
- February 10th-17th—Workshops on Stewardship and Introduction to Church's Ministries
- February 17th—Distribute Post Questionnaire
- February 24th-March 3rd—Overall Compilation and overall analysis of data
- March 12th—Meet with senior pastor to share salient issues and potential model for active lay involvement in ministry

Implementation

In this section the field experience conducted at Turner Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church will be discussed. This project emanates from the writer's desire to get many hands and hearts in the church on deck in order for the ministries of his context to flourish. When I joined this context in the early 1990's, I witnessed the involvement and excitement of laypersons as they assisted the pastors in growing the ministry from approximately 200 to approximately 6,000. Because of the commitment of these dedicated servants of God, the Lord blessed the church immensely with spiritual, material, and financial resources. After the church relocated the ministry to its 3,000 seat sanctuary, it appears that the level of commitment and dedication fizzled. The proverbial 80-20 percent rule appeared to take hold. The writer is on a quest to discover what is causing this inertia or indifference and to recommend a model that equips, attracts and involves most of the inactive 80 percent into active participation of the church.

At the outset of this research project, the context associates were identified and assembled. This group comprised of brothers and sisters whom my family and I have known for a long time at Turner. As observed, they have demonstrated over and over again their love for God and His people by their service and Christian demeanor. At the first meeting, the topic of the dissertation, the undergirding scriptures, and the rationale and significance of the project were shared and discussed. Two context associates thought that the project, if implemented, would not be only beneficial to Turner but to the Sixth Episcopal District of the A.M.E church as Christian education is a paramount emphasis of the Bishop.

It was emphasized that although this project is academic, it is also primarily spiritual. At this initial meeting, I shared that I intended to address this issue with the selection of a focus group, as I am not a pastor or a preacher, where I could utilize my congregation as research participants. However, it is a blessing that Pastor Marcus is also one of my mentors at United Theological Seminary. Therefore, he was quite aware of the project and will be making an appeal to the congregation requesting a group of at least twelve basically inactive members to assist with the project as focus group. In addition to gathering and analyzing the data, context associates were employed in facilitating Bible study classes and the workshops.

After Pastor Marcus made the appeal for the focus group on the first Sunday in January 2015, the Lord blessed with an excited focus group of twenty-one inactive, active, and formerly active members. At the first focus group meeting, the group related that their first priority is to serve God and humanity; however, they had encountered numerous barriers and challenges and were advocating that the necessary direction, communication and equipping be provided. During the first meeting, this group was given the pre-questionnaire/survey to complete. The questionnaire/survey was to evaluate some facts about what was preventing these members from serving in the church. According to Gallup, “surveys can provide a reality check for churches, helping them operate on the basis of facts, not assumptions. Surveys can also help open up the communication process in a church.”⁷

Qualitative research design was utilized as it afforded the exploration of how the context can involve or tap into that large majority of its membership that sits on the

⁷ George Gallup and D. Michael Lindsay, the Gallup Guide: Reality Check for the 21st Century Churches (Princeton, NJ: Loveland, CO: Gallup Organization; Group), 17, 20.

periphery. To test the hypothesis and critically examine this framework, the project consisted of pre-post questionnaires, Bible study and workshop series followed by focus group discussions and Interviews of inactive members. The triangulation of the data validates the results of the study.

The pre questionnaire was designed to ascertain what was preventing the active participation of the focus group in the church's ministries. This was a simple survey of thirty questions to generate initial feedback from the participants. The second part of the research was the Bible study and workshop series followed by lively focus group discussions. The discussions provided a roundtable type approach which allowed participants to freely articulate their understanding of the biblical calling of all Christians and not only the clergy or a few of the laity, their rationale for inactivity or nonparticipation in the ministries, their thoughts and recommendations on what could be done by the ministries and their leaders to facilitate wholesome participation in the ministries. The post questionnaire was designed to verify the level of understanding of the various Bible study topics and the concepts from the workshops and the discussions. The third part of the research triangle was the Interviews of ten inactive members.

Pre- Questionnaire/Survey

1. How long have you been a member at Turner?

64% responded over 10 years

36% responded under 10 years

2. Do you feel welcome or connected to the ministry at Turner?

Yes No Why?

Yes = 73%

No = 27%

3. If not, do you feel unwelcome to the point where you have become spectators?

No response = 60%

Yes= 20%

No = 20%

4. Do you feel accepted here at Turner?

Yes No Why?

Yes = 90%

No = 10%. Reason was Old School vs New School

5. Do you feel people want to know or befriend you?

Yes No Why?

Yes = 80%

No= 20%

6. What is hampering your involvement in the church's ministry?

40% - Lack of information/communication about ministries, mission of ministries
not clear; if clear, do not feel that the activities focused on are relevant

20% - Leadership; bureaucracy

20% - Nothing

10%- I have a lot of family demands

10- Already active

7. What should the church be doing to involve you and other members in the ministry?

55% blamed it on leadership

- Ill-equipped leaders
- Lack of training
- Lack of communication from the leaders; e-mails are good; however, personal calls are very important to new members
- Lack of literature about ministries
- Lack of accountability
- Ministry leaders meeting with new members during new member training and sharing details with new members and getting them to sign up if possible
- Seemingly flawed appointment of leadership process
- Ensure leaders are appointed according to their gifts
- Recommend changing the present leadership
- Starting meetings on time
- Basically difficult to navigate through the administrative bureaucracy if one cannot get answer/feedback
- Some volunteers are not customer friendly; need sensitivity/sensibility training in church ministry

25% blamed it on

- Effective communication by the church/leadership i.e. Returned phone calls
- Church should update its website
- Need a list of ministries and contact information
- Highlight ministry activities in bulletin/ministry cast so members know exactly what the ministry does

10% - Survey the congregation

10%- Need a suggestion box

8. Is the process of assimilation adequate- moving from the Crowd to the Core?

Yes No Why?

57% - No

29% - Unsure

14% - Yes

9. Are you positively impacted by the attitude and warmth of the pastor and the existing members?

Yes No Why?

62% -Yes

38% -No

10. Do you feel that the current leadership of the church is open to the participation of other members in their ranks?

Yes No Why?

30% - No, reasons include:

- It is like an elite society
- Seems like you have to be in a clique or have a certain stature to be in leadership
- Doesn't seem to be for ordinary members

30% - Yes, reasons include:

- The current leadership encourages participation
- There is openness among some of the leaders

30% - Not sure, reasons include:

- Have not encountered open rejection
- Not sure leadership of church is opened to participation of other members but believe Pastor is

10 % - Ambivalent

11. Has the church become a little too self- serving for your comfort level?

Yes No Why?

Yes - 36%

No – 36%

Ambivalent- 18%

12. Are the backs of the leadership turned to the lost and struggling members?

Yes No Why?

Yes – 80%, reasons include:

- Struggling members are ignored
- Full time or part time persons should be assigned to the front desk during business hours
- It is very important for a member in need to be able to speak with a person when the member calls or goes to the church for assistance
- Lack of good and consistent customer service can be detrimental to an organization
- Turner is too large not to have an adequate, dependable and consistent source of front line communication
- Leaders are not aware of what the real needs of members are
- Sometimes leadership available is not the real resource for the member/members' needs

No – 20%, reasons include:

- Leadership seems to care about all members
- Leadership's heart is in the right place, but the processes need improvement
- There may be some issues with awareness

13. Has the church become too 'aristocratic' to its own detriment?

Yes No Why?

50% - Yes, reasons include:

- Talk to some of the members who have left the church; they may want to share their insight while they were members
- The church should keep the members connected as there is a high percentage of members who are not from Georgia
- Some of the members/leaders portray that attitude

30 % - No, reasons Include:

- Leadership does not reflect that and that you will find all kinds of people in every church

20% - Unaware

14. Have you attended the New Member Class, the S.H.A.P.E. Class?

Yes – 92% - New Members and SHAPE classes

No- 27% - SHAPE Class

None of the classes = 9%

15. Do you attend Bible Study and Sunday school classes?

Yes No Why?

Yes- 64%

No – 36% reasons include:

- Leaders/teachers are always late
- Time is not convenient because of work schedule and distance from church
- Would like more information about times of classes
- Attend Sunday School but not Bible Study because have little kids

16. Are the New Member Class, the Shape Class and the Church-at-Study effective in incorporating the talent and potential of the majority of the membership?

Yes No Why?

No- 33%, reasons include:

- Some of the instructors are not equipped
- New Member Class and church at study are functioning; however, we have not had SHAPE Class in recent times
- Have not attended all these classes. The new member class opens the door to talent and potential; however, it needs to be refined

Unsure 44%, reasons include:

- Majority of the membership is not participating considering the size of the congregation. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the effectiveness of the classes

Yes 22%, reasons include:

- The classes are effective; members need to do their part to develop/nurture their talent and potential in order to see results/fruits

17. Do you think there is a need for additional methods of training/equipping the membership?

Yes No Why?

80% - Yes, reasons include:

- Leadership training in how to be an effective church leader
- Institute on-line leadership classes via the website as reasons such as distance, job, family prevent leaders from onsite training during the week
- Extremely important that website be updated and maintained with current information

10% - Unsure

10% - No

18. Is there a need for a small group ministry?

Yes No Why?

70% -Yes, reasons include:

- With small groups, we can reach more people
- Carefully select the leaders of the small groups as they should be respectful of the members, punctual and open to new ideas
- Small groups should primarily and spiritually focus on the needs of the group
- Some people are more comfortable in small groups
- Not everyone does well in a large group
- Consider connecting people who have teenaged children so they can share experience and benefit from each other

10% - No – reasons include:

- A ministry should have purpose. It should not exist for just getting together
- Activities open to all would promote sound interaction

20% - Ambivalent

19. Should a cadre of church officers and the vast pool of ministers be strategically positioned throughout the sanctuary on Sunday to contact at least two new persons?

Yes No Why?

50% - Yes, reasons include:

- Leaders sit in front and have no idea of what is happening in the church
- People are leaving during service, invitation, communion, and after giving tithes. It is a trend and should be stopped
- The leaders should engage the membership more directly
- This is a great idea that needs prayerful planning

50% - No – Reasons include:

- It would seem orchestrated. Interaction should be natural and sincere
- Movement of this nature would be chaotic

- Current location of ministers and leaders more effectively meet the needs of the church

20. Are the men's, women's, and young adult ministries effective in soliciting the participation of all members?

Yes No Why?

40% - Yes, reasons include:

- Women's ministry absolutely solicit participation
- The Village is effective in getting participation. Just need to expand programs within their ministry

30% - No, reasons include:

- Do not understand the methods used to solicit participation as attendance in the various ministries is low in comparison to the size of the congregation
- Contact information is limited for ministries

10% - Ambivalent

21. Do you think the church is concerned about Succession Planning?

Yes No Why?

62.5% - No; reasons include:

- Not aware that it is taking place
- We should know who are being groomed
- Topic has been discussed with senior leadership; but no interest

12.5% Yes

25% - Ambivalent

22. How do you think the church can tap into that educated and professional pool of young adults between the ages of 22 and 40?

- 30% - labeled effective communication via website, social media etc.
- 20% - requested involvement in leadership and decision making

- 20% - claimed that service is too long
- 10% - want to see more accountability from leadership
- 10% - want more spiritual connection

23. Are they (22-40 year olds) apprehensive because their parents' generation dominates the leadership roles of the church?

Yes No Why?

50% - No, reasons include:

- They expect that so it does not impact them
- There are other obstacles that prevent them from not participating in the church such as lack of information/communication

30% - Yes, reasons include:

- Some parents are not adaptable to new methods and ideas. Therefore, they shy away from sharing or being involved so as not to ruffle feathers

20% - Ambivalent

24. Do you know the advantages or benefits of joining/active participation?

Yes No

87.5% - Yes, reasons include:

- Personal spiritual growth
- Joining and participating bring you closer to God

12.5% - No

25. Do you know the requirements of members/expectations?

Yes No

70% - Yes

10% - No

20% - Ambivalent

26. Do you know what you need to know as a member of Turner/ a Christian?

Yes No

44% Yes

54%- Unsure

27. Do you know what you need to be able to do?

Yes No

40% -Yes

60% - No, reasons include:

➤ Did not understand the question

28. Do you feel the methods used by the church to involve its members in the ministry are working? If so which one(s) and why?

54% -No; reasons include:

➤ Lack of communication

➤ Members need to be continuously enlightened and motivated

46% -Yes; reasons include:

➤ Some ministries such as Youth Ministry appears to be reaching the young folks

➤ Others such as church-at-study, new members etc. are reaching folks

29. What do you feel was the problem with the methods that you think are not working?

Problems include:

➤ Lack of accountability from leadership- large church- need to track or else things fall into a proverbial 'Black Hole'

➤ Poor Communication- Communication will be key to improving involvement

- Long tenure of leadership especially ineffective ones- recommends term limits as average tenure is approx. 10 years
- No easy access platform to provide/receive input/ideas
- Lack of effective community programs such as games, social activities, mentorship/transition, networking with small not affiliated church to tap into their talent pool

30. Do you know your spiritual gift(s)? If yes, please share them. If not, share what you think they may be.

88% - Yes

12% No

Bible Study Series

The first Bible study series was entitled “Called to Serve,” taken from Exodus 18: 14-27 and Acts 6:1-7. I facilitated the study. During this study, it was explicated and revealed that all Christians are called to serve as expounded in the biblical foundation paper. These two Old Testament and New Testament scriptures were used to correlate them to the task at hand today. It was pointed out that if lay Christians do not put their hands to the plow, the Great Commission would never be realized, as the pastor/clergy cannot do it alone. It was stressed that there is a growing need for committed and spiritual lay leadership and members. Referral was also made to Ephesians 4 as an ancillary text as it clearly states that God has imbued each of us with unique gifts. After the study, a discussion was held to ascertain and evaluate the understanding of the texts by the focus group and for them to have an opportunity to convey what was preventing them from serving in the church.

The second Bible study series was entitled “God’s Divine Staffing Plan.” After a brief rationale for God’s delegation of duties as contained in Ephesians 4 and Matthew 9: 37-38 was provided, one of Turner’s preachers and biblical scholars, Reverend Denise Van Dorn, who is also a context associate was introduced. Reverend Van Dorn serves as minister for the Regarding Women’s Ministry at Turner Chapel AME Church. Reverend Van Dorn provided a profound exegetical and spiritual interpretation of God’s positioning people for service by their various gifts. Her presentation was embedded in 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 1 and 4, John 15, Romans 12, 1 Peter 4. She enlightened us that Spiritual gifts commence with salvation; however, the gifts have to be harnessed through a *3-D system* namely; Discover, Develop and Deploy. Discovery comes from prayerfully asking God where to serve in His vineyard. Development comes from being taught in the Word. Christians should avail themselves to Training/Teaching. After the first two, Deployment is easily facilitated as one discovers his place to serve. She emphasized that everyone has an assignment; however, a spiritual gifts assessment is needed each year just like an annual physical check-up.

The third Bible study series dealt with “Membership: Its Responsibilities and Advantages.” After sharing with the focus group a synopsis of our responsibilities as Christians, the high points from a sermon delivered by the senior pastor of Turner Chapel AME Church on September 14, 2014 entitled “Membership has its Benefits and Responsibilities,” were shared with the group. The text was 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. Subsequently, another context associate and Bible scholar, Reverend Edwina Graham, who serves as minister for Membership at Turner was introduced. Reverend Graham fully elaborated on the topic: “Membership Has Its Privileges.” She clearly defined who

is considered a member, as attending church regularly does not make one a member. She informed the group that the Biblical reason for commitment is found in Ephesians 5:25. She concluded by emphasizing that the privilege of being a member of a community of faith is the responsibility, which comes with learning to live, love, learn and be together, as well as do our part to transform our communities and world.

Following the Bible study series, two workshops were conducted, namely: Stewardship and Church's Ministries. Again, context associates Lee Waller and Henry Pash facilitated the workshops. Brother Waller served for many years as a Steward at Turner Chapel and other churches and has always advocated that Christians should be good stewards of God's resources. Brother Waller facilitated the first workshop and elaborated that stewardship is a lifestyle as it began in the book of Genesis, Chapter 2:15. He propounded that as God's representatives and stewards, God has given us material things to faithfully administer for His glory. Psalm 24: 1 puts it succinctly "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." He shared the four principles of biblical stewardship namely: "The Principle of Ownership" (Psalm 2; 4), "The Principle of Responsibility" (Mt 25:14-30), "The Principle of Accountability" (Rom 14:12) and "The Principle of Rewards" (Col 3:23-24).

Brother Pash facilitated the second Workshop. Brother Pash, a former Steward, serves as the Church Administrator and member on several high level commissions including the Finance and Expansion Commissions. I usually tell him that he knows 'where all the bodies are buried'. Brother Pash used the occasion to share copies of the various ministries of the church and explained how they are placed under the various purposes of the church. The various purposes are: Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship,

Evangelism, Membership, Community, Youth, etc. He then elaborated that the church exists to do the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. He shared that a question was posed to church members: Why does the church exist? Only a dismal 11 percent responded by saying to win souls to Christ. He furthered eluded, if a church is not growing, it is dying, and a church must have a purpose and develop a process by which it will grow. The leader or senior pastor must vividly explain up front where the church is going and what it is trying to do and assess them. Annual assessments are necessary as they assist in correcting imbalances. Veteran management consultant and author Peter Drucker calls that the difference between efficiency and effectiveness. He concluded by saying that the Word works if we work according to the will of God.

All lessons and presentations were well received as spiritual and vivid discussions followed.

At the end of the Bible study series, the workshops and the discussions, the researcher distributed a post questionnaire to the focus group to determine the impact of the studies, the workshops, and the discussions.

Post Questionnaire/Survey

1. What were the most impactful things that were revealed to you as a result of your participation in the discussion sessions?
 - Some persons do not know the rich blessing that they received the moment they received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior according to God's Word, Ephesians 1:1-14
 - Some persons may not understand that "Getting Saved" is not the end; instead it is just the beginning of a journey with the Lord that will take

them from earth to heaven. Philippians 1:6

- Some persons view attending Bible study, Sunday school and worship services as suggestions to be considered. On the contrary, they are mandates from our Lord to aid in our spiritual growth. 2 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 10:22-25
- Some persons do not understand that it is vitally important to nurture their personal relationship with the Lord on a daily basis by setting aside time to have “Daily Devotions/Quiet Time,” Prayer, Bible reading/meditation, journaling and learning to recognize the voice of our God. Psalm 63:1-8, Psalm 32:8, Psalm 143:8

Having a process in place for “Equipping the Saints” in the above basics is paramount if we are a church that is growing spiritually. For many of us, it is ignorance and not arrogance...We would do better if we knew better...

- We should ensure leaders are trained in their service area
- Our “Purpose Driven Church” structure may need to be re-evaluated
- Stewardship must be intentional
- It is important to serve according to your gifts
- The church needs to have a clear identity and know its purpose and act in accordance with that purpose
- Stewardship is holistic
- The church needs to be intentional in how it engages members, new and old
- The group was represented by young and old, leaders and non-leaders, new and old members, which reflected Turner’s membership
- The participants have great ideas that can be incorporated at Turner to illicit meaningful change to the community and its membership
- Participants want to see change and are ready to work if given the help and the right tools

- Participants are from different backgrounds with different skills and gifts but all aspire to work for the same goal
 - Turner is a work-in- process
 - More people care than I thought
 - We have a lot of smart people who can get the job done
 - We will make the necessary changes
 - The church needs a purpose
 - Members must first learn the importance of “loving” God
 - Members must be accountable
 - Most members are not good stewards
 - A very critical position at the reception desk was eliminated due to budget cuts
 - There is a shared perception that some leaders have been put into positions in which they are not equipped
 - Lack of communication and accountability are major problems in the church
 - There are members who are truly committed to the church and are willing to stay here and help resolve problems that negatively impact the church.
2. Did the Bible study presentation and discussion help you to have a clearer understanding that all Christians are called to serve God?
- 100 % -Yes
3. Did the Bible Study presentation and discussion help you understand that God has a ‘Divine Staffing Plan’?
- 100% - Yes
4. As a result of the sessions, do you have a better understanding that we all have been given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit?
- 86% - Yes.

14% - No

5. Did the Bible study, presentation, and discussion help you understand the difference between a church attender and a church member?

100% -Yes

6. Of the church's more than 100 ministries, which ones do you think attract you most?

- Bible Study
- Women's Ministry-
- Couples Ministry
- Married Couples Ministry
- Regarding Women Ministry
- IT/Computer Ministry
- Dream Lifters- Career/Entrepreneur Ministry
- Foodshare
- Health Ministry- will like to work specifically with Breast Cancer Support
- Mentorship
- Ministry Fair
- Athletics/Sports
- Youth Ministry
- New Members Ministry
- Reasons for choosing the above ministries listed below.
- Bible study is vital in the spiritual life of a believer. It is the difference between spiritual stagnation and spiritual growth. 2 Timothy 2:15, I Peter 2:1-3

- God gave me a passion for women's ministry over 25 years ago. I have had the blessed privilege and opportunity to serve in leadership capacity in several churches over these years
 - It is a most blessed and rewarding experience to encourage a sister who feels that life is over because of some devastating experience in her life that "When you have nothing left but God...you have more than enough to start again"
 - There are also instances where I get to come along side of a sister who loves the Lord and follow her as she learns to trust the Lord in her walk with the Lord and in her work for the Lord...Philippians 3:13-15...Psalm 34:8
 - I believe that ministering to married couples strengthens marriages and strong marriages make for spiritually strong homes, communities, and churches
 - Genesis 2:18-22, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, Ephesians 5:21-33
 - As individuals we have to be able to have healthy mind, body and spirit to live full lives. Women are instrumental in our leadership and through mentorship I believe each one can teach one
 - Children love to be with other children
 - I have an interest in meeting, greeting and welcoming new people. I have professional and personal experiences with breast cancer. I have a passion for supporting, encouraging, educating and sharing my experiences
7. Are you involved in any of the church's various ministries? If not, from the presentation, do you think you know where you want to serve?
- 70% -Yes.
 - 30% -No
8. If you are already involved in a ministry, are you willing to persevere in your ministry until the issues that seem to hinder you are addressed?
- 43 % - Yes.
 - 57%- No

9. Are you willing to be one of the problem solvers of the issues that confront your ministry and the church?

- 70%- Yes
- 20%- No
- 10%- Ambivalent

Reason: It is discouraging to work so hard on resolutions and then see your efforts consistently fall by the wayside.

10. Are you willing to attend classes that lead to spiritual growth such as Bible Study, Sunday School, S.H.A.P.E. (Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Aptitude, Personality and Experience), and Leadership so that you can be fully equipped for service in the Lord and church?

- 100% -Yes

11. Do you support the church financially? If not, do you now have a better understanding of the Biblical reasons for supporting the church financially?

- 100% -Yes. By the grace of God I tithe.
- 20% is tithing; 80% indicated that they support the church financially.

12. Do you think you can now share with others the reasons the Pastor/Clergy needs all of us?

- 100% -Yes!

Reason: By the grace of God I do share with others as we are the “Body of Christ”

- I need to assist so the ministry can flourish

13. Will you tell others about Turner Chapel and its various ministries?

- 100% - Yes
- However, there is lack of available information about the various ministries and ministry leaders are not known
- The Ministry Cast can be utilized to highlight a few ministries and their leaders on Sundays

- When ministry leaders are known, they are not generally responsive
- All members should have access to the Ministry information
- Ministry information should be continuously updated
- It is discouraging when a member shows interest in a ministry, contacts the leader, but does not receive a response

Summary Of Learning

At the conclusion of the Bible studies, workshops and discussions, the Context Associates regrouped to gather and analyze the results from the questionnaires. The analysis brought forth six main issues, namely:

1. Lack of adequate information to serve
2. Poor ministry leadership
3. Ineffective communication from the church
4. Members feel abandoned when they are in need
5. The church exercises favoritism- perception that all members are not treated the same
6. Perception that the senior pastor is disconnected from the membership and some clergy are too elitist

The context associates then brainstormed potential solutions to address the issues and prioritize the potential solutions. The context associates also proposed and we undertook to interview several really inactive members—those who are not involved in any ministries in the church. The rationale is to ensure that we had adequate representation of uninvolved members. A new questionnaire consisting of twelve questions was developed. The responses received from the interviews corroborated the issues brought forward by the focus group.

The field research revealed a stark similarity to the situation that initiated the leadership of the laity in the Book of Acts, Chapter 6. In the daily distribution of food, the koinonia was being threatened. The Hebraic Jews considered themselves the In Group. They attempted to sideline or devalue the worth of the Grecian Jews because they were considered the Out Group. In our context today, physical food is not the issue. Raymond Brown noted what is propelling the contention or apathy in our ministries today may not be physical food or common goods.⁸ However, there is a potential struggle among church members to be considered part of the body of Christ.

In modern times, it may be manifested by exclusion from the ministries in which a member wants to serve simply because the established or old members are not embracing them as bona fide members of the fellowship. In a large context or even in smaller contexts, these established members or Hebraic Jews may be establishments to themselves either because the clergy has become too far removed from the daily distributions of food or they may have turned a blind eye to the wanton, disdainful and callous attitudes of the entrenched leadership. It appears this situation is primarily impeding the progress of the modern church today.

The research in my context also revealed that there are numerous members who appear inactive or apathetic. They want to serve and have availed themselves for service on numerous occasions. However, the existing cadre of church officers tends to ignore them and when they attempt to bypass the leaders of the organizations and boards in which they want to serve, their appeals fall on deaf ears as they do not get their calls returned. Their efforts fall in a theoretical 'Black Hole.'

⁸ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York; NY: Doubleday Dell Publishing Company, 1997), 293.

They are included in the Sunday worship services or the Bible study classes; however, when it comes to one on one communication with a long time member or an officer of a ministry, some members feel ignored or isolated by the posture of the longtime members or leaders of the ministries. This is what is referred to as 'inclusion but not belonging.' The regrettable consequence is that the ignored or Hellenist Jews today may not be as vocal or assertive enough as the group illustrated in the Book of Acts, Chapter 6. Their responses to their rejection or isolation on most occasions are manifested by their inactivity in the various ministries of the church. They are on the membership roster. They may be regular church attenders or even tithers; however, their participation is virtually nonexistent, has decreased, or is decreasing. Apparently, churches are much better at creating initial contact than sustaining them.⁹

The nonresponse of ministry leaders to the interest of members who want to become part of their ministries could potentially cause the church to miss out on the potential that lies in the other '80 percent.' Several effective ministry leaders could potentially arise from this large segment of the membership including the future pastor of the church. As a member of the New Members Ministry and a facilitator of one of the classes in my context, I have observed over the years how sometimes those who come into the church appearing lost, downtrodden, forsaken and perhaps did not really know Jesus in the true pardon of their sins begin to become totally assimilated, grow in grace, and rise to leadership positions in the church. Some have even become ministers of the gospel.

The question has been posed over and over about the rationale for embarking on this project. The following salient reasons have been shared as the backdrop that

⁹ Thumma and Bird, *The Other 80 Percent*, 25.

undergirds this academic yet spiritual endeavor. When my family and I joined the ministry of Turner Chapel AME Church about twenty-four years ago, a few actions shaped my worldview of the church:

1. Turner Chapel AME Church really cared for its members because it seemed to welcome all regardless of one's origin. Noteworthy was that the pastor, Reverend Dr. Kenneth Marcus is a native Trinidadian
2. The church was in a growth mode. Therefore, the pastor and ministry leaders were open to the participation of all who were willing to serve. The astronomical growth of the ministry reminds us of how God has blessed the Marcuses and inspired them with the vision and passion to create a ministry that would not only impact Marietta but the world at large
3. A high level of interaction existed among the members as they served, attended Bible study and Sunday school classes, grew in grace, deepened their faith, met to deliberate on the challenges that faced the ministry, suggested solutions, tackled and solved problems with the help of the Almighty God.
4. As a layman, it was observed firsthand how God used spiritually equipped laymen and growing laymen in the miracle that raised Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church to this enviable level. The church had a banner sign for a long time that read the "The Miracle is Unfolding."

As the church members surmounted challenges upon challenges, they, including the researcher, all grew in their faith experience believing that there is nothing impossible with God. One only needs to visit the site of the ministry located at 548 Lawrence Street in Marietta, Georgia in 1991 and follow the growth in membership from approximately 200 members to approximately 6,000 members today. As Turner Chapel grew, its journey led to holding worship services in the school auditoriums in Cobb County. With the Lord's continued blessings, the church constructed a 1,000 seat Recreational Hall followed by the erection of a 3,000 seat sanctuary located at 492 North Marietta Parkway, Marietta, GA.

The construction of the sanctuary was a vital step in the process to enable the church to be situated at a place where numerous vibrant ministries could develop and function under the auspices of the Holy Spirit. The pastor and members subscribed to the axiom that ‘if you build it, they will come.’ By God’s grace, 1,670 new members have been added to the church’s roster in the last five years.¹⁰ However, total membership is reported to be approximately 6,000 members for each year for the period under review. It should be investigated whether or not moving into the large and beautiful cathedral has created a ‘wilderness’ experience. Where are the 1,670 new members? Are they fully assimilated, equipped and motivated? Has the church relinquished the mission of winning more souls and inviting all to the Lord for rather ordinary and mundane activities or has the congregation become more like the children of ancient Israel, virtually paralyzed at the border of the Promised Land? Even though ‘Joshua’, the senior pastor, keeps prompting the congregation to go and ‘take the land’—that is growing the ministry; the reality is the church may be tarrying at the border for forty years.

In the past, the membership seemed excited and anxious to take the ministry to the next level by contributing their time, talent, and resources with the assistance of the Almighty God. A good number of members ‘put their hands to the plow’ as testimony after testimony revealed the growth and activities of the various ministries and the transformation that were taking place in the lives of the membership at large. One testimony that resonates loud within the congregation is as the church commenced expansion activities, purchased property after property and built the Recreation Hall as a reprieve from worshiping in the Cobb County school auditoriums, the Lord provided the

¹⁰ Pastor’s Annual Report to the Annual Conference of the Atlanta North Annual Conference of the 6th Episcopal District of The African Methodist Episcopal Church (2010-2014).

resources. The church rarely borrowed from banks. Whenever loans were needed, the loans were retired very quickly as the giving units of the ministry was on an incremental trajectory. There was a budget surplus, which allowed the church to embark on the next project. However, as the membership increased, the percentage of dedicated and/or equipped laity seemed to shrink in portion to the membership. With a membership of approximately 6000, there is a need for a higher percentage of dedicated, committed, and equipped laity to assist with the challenges and burdens of a large congregation.

The dedicated, committed, and equipped laity, referred to as the 'Core' is tantamount to those who carry the major responsibilities of the ministry on their shoulders. The Core members play important roles as they are the ones who evangelize and invite people to church, teach Sunday school classes, sweep the churches, pay the mortgage and other expenses, bake the cookies and cook the food for fellowship. Without them, the pastor would have to perform these functions; however, the sacred task of the ministry is too vital to be left on the shoulders of the pastor and a few zealous members.

Normally, major church decisions are made taking into consideration the strength of the entire membership; however, it is the Core that eventually ends up bearing the brunt of the burden. From a banking perspective, whenever, a church requests financing of a project, banks normally request the list of the 'giving units' (core) because the giving units are considered the matured and spiritually grounded Christians. Most churches tend to lead from the Crowd and not the Core. As observed, the Crowd is a disjointed, fragmented and a rather uncommitted segment of the ministry. They need shepherding to move them to the core because it is at the core where one becomes spiritually grounded in his/her belief in Jesus Christ.

If ministries do not move the crowd to the core, they could end up on ‘rocky surfaces’ as proclaimed in Matthews 13:5-7. By intentionally moving the crowd to the core through teaching and serving, the seeds take hold as they fall on good ground. In that process, the critical mass that will do the work of the church is increased, will bear the burden of the ministry and will assist in making decisions. It is not the Lord’s intention for the core to get stretched too thin and begin to crumble as manifested by their egos, attitudes, ambitions and selfishness due to extreme fatigue and weariness. Although the task of equipping and involving most of the 80% in the ministry of the church appears daunting, Thurmma and Bird advise, “Remember that involvement and participation are the correlates of spiritual growth and a person’s spiritual fulfillment. 80% participation is not the goal—spiritual fervor and growth is.”¹¹ No ministry wants to be filled with baby Christians who are susceptible to the whims and caprices of every dogma or doctrine. Thanks be to God that the laity is constantly being prodded to move from their inertia to active roles in the church.

As previously mentioned, the arrival of the Marcus team caused the vision and mission of Turner to take on new and exciting dimensions. Additionally, the church leadership adopted and supplemented its structure with the Purpose Driven Church model. A model promulgated by Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback in the 1990’s. The rationale was that as the church grew numerically, it became impossible for the senior pastor to effectively attend to the needs of the congregation without the assistance of ministry leaders of the various purposes such as evangelism, service, worship, membership, discipleship, youth, etc.

¹¹ Pastor’s Annual Report to the Annual Conference, 26.

Alongside the Purpose Driven Church model, the context Turner Chapel AME Church has a proven structure that has survived for over a century. The structure is steeped in the Discipline of African Methodism. In 2015, the church celebrates its sesquicentennial anniversary. One can conclude that a church founded during the horrendous period of slavery in North America and the abyss of the greatest villainy in human history, summoned not only the intestinal fortitude of a devout people but also an unswerving faith that resonates with the words in the song “Through it all, I have learned to trust in Jesus.” That faith posture of its forefathers and mothers fortified the survival of Turner during the abysmal period of segregation in the Jim Crow South and the egregious racial segregation in Marietta, Georgia and the U.S. as a whole.

Its survival, growth, and fame are certainly the power of faith in action by several witnesses in the church triumphant and in the church militant. Its founder, Henry McNeal Turner and two other pastors served as Bishops of the AME Church. The church certainly stands on the shoulders of some of God’s most dedicated servants. This tradition has been profoundly passed down to succeeding generations as one can readily find a cadre of faithful members and leaders who are dedicated to the survival and growth of the ministry. Since its inception, Turner has constructed four edifices as it responded to the growth of the ministry.¹²

The construct of the Purpose Driven Church structure in conjunction with the historical structure of the church was intended to allow all voices into the church’s conversation as the ministry grew. Has it worked well in the past? Certainly! Is the church still reaping some positive results from this hybrid structure as manifested by the accretion to and transformation of the various ministries and the church at large? The

¹² Turner Chapel Dedication Booklet, 2005, 28.

proof of the pudding is in the eating. Has the passage of time, the continued growth and the large sanctuary coupled with a ‘we have arrived’ mentality beckon the church to reassess a few aspects of this structure or perhaps propose a new one? This may require prayerful consideration by the church’s leadership.

The results from the study under review impinged largely on the church’s leadership and culture. The church must intentionally avoid barriers to service so that all members can feel invited to serve. Perception of poor or ineffective ministry leadership should primarily be addressed in the selection/election and tenure process. Upon announcing the Leadership Chair at the previous Official Board Meeting, the pastor remarked, “Leadership is important.” It appears that Jethro’s advice to Moses on the selection of a leadership team for ancient Israel is still relevant today. Jethro suggested that Moses “teach the people God’s decrees and instructions and show them the way they are to live and behave. When that is done, he should select some capable persons from among the people who fear God, are trustworthy, hate dishonest gain, and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Have them Serve (Ex 18:20-22).

The leadership’s duty is to serve. The leadership must be taught the Lord’s example of service (the basin and towel which connote humility) as they can exert both positive and negative attributes that influence the culture of the church. According to Samuel Chand, culture not vision or strategy is the most powerful factor in any organization.¹³ Therefore, Jethro’s first suggestion was that the leadership be taught. To be a leader in the church, spiritual training should not be optional. Selection/election of

¹³ Samuel Chand, *Cracking Your Church’s Code* (San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass), 2.

spiritual leadership should be an open process as it engenders trust and trust creates followership. People follow whom they trust.

Service here becomes paramount not rulership or control. Those who lead in the church must be taught to lead as in the footsteps of Christ who is the greatest leadership role model of all time. Jesus profoundly demonstrated the servant-leader posture when he washed his disciples' feet. In other words, he was saying to them I, the Lord, the King of kings am not too high on a pedestal that I cannot stoop to your level. Equally, he was instructing them not to think too highly of themselves to the point where they cease associating with men of lower estate. His example engendered trust. Bonhoeffer notes, "No leadership in the community was possible except servant leadership in the style of Jesus."¹⁴ In the book, *Lead Like Jesus*, the authors, Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges allude that the leadership model of individualism is flawed as it encourages the "It is all about me" syndrome that promotes self-promotion (pride), and self-protection (fear). Many leaders act as if the sheep are there only for the shepherd. In this scenario, personal relationships, mutual respect, loving care are often undermined. That's the bad news. The good news is that there is a better way. That is the one perfect leadership.¹⁵

Churches must not assume that those who have succeeded as leaders in business, academia, and the sciences are already primed for leadership role in the church. Experience reveals that besides their intellectual prowess, professional or political connections, and work ethics, quite a few climb the corporate or academic ladder employing Machiavellian tendencies. They could have even been Saul in their previous

¹⁴ Vincent J. Pastro "Dietrich Bonhoeffer- A Model for Religious Leadership," In *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook*. Sharon Henderson Callahan (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2013) 620.

¹⁵ Blanchard and Hodges, *Lead Like Jesus*.

or current lives—zealous and very capable in their contexts; however, they could have encountered a ‘Damascus’ experience. Pastors and church leaders must be cognizant that perhaps, the Holy Spirit could have sent potential leaders to Ananias, (the Pastor), so that their spiritual eyes could be opened. Furthermore, as William A. Pleuthner in his book, *Building Up Your Congregation* posits, there are too many people on church boards who come from professions that centered on people coming to them i.e. bankers, lawyers, doctors, and retired business people. Unlike those with salesman-like personality who are constantly creating networks, they are not accustomed to reaching out to people. He nudges churches to assess whether this ‘Dangerous Dignity’ of their boards is dwarfing their church’s progress.¹⁶

If the church exists to firstly evangelize, then the modus operandi of some of those who occupy the seats on church boards needs to be tweaked if not completely shattered. Conscientious biblical training and instruction in the mode of our Lord, the King of kings, to arouse the sensitivity and sensibility of church leaders, can only implement this paradigm shift. As one of the context associates of this project eloquently stated, “Leaders who do not avail themselves to be trained in the mode of Jesus and are habitually causing hurt and pain must be prayerfully relieved of their duties because the church is already under a barrage of fire by the enemy only to be wounded by friendly fire as well.” When leaders are sensitized to the brokenness of most Christians, the shepherds can rest assured that as they invite the sheep who are already heavy laden and encumbered with a load of care, the leadership will not prey on them and drive them from the fold by their nonchalant or oblivious attitude.

¹⁶ Pleuthner, *Building Up Your Congregation*, 5.

Another major aspect churches should avoid is the lack of effective communication. Verbal or nonverbal communication speaks volumes for a ministry. Researchers have propounded that seventy percent of human communication is non-verbal. Therefore, not communicating or failure to communicate insinuates negativity, which may not be necessarily correct. Failure to communicate could be subject to a lot of interpretation or misinterpretation. A phone call to the church from a member or potential member that goes to voicemail and is not returned within a reasonable period is subject to negative interpretations. It does not matter whether the call was intended to inquire about the time of service, to request prayer or benevolence or to speak to a ministry leader concerning the requirements to become part of his/her ministry. The call should be returned promptly. It should not fall into a virtual black hole.

Brandon Cox posed the question “Do you dare audit your church’s communication strategy?” Before he could get an answer, he surmises that everything your church does is communication, from the condition of the parking lot to the content in the bulletin to the tone of your sermon. Everything communicates something about what you really value, regardless of what you say you value.¹⁷ He then cautioned churches to avoid several of the following communication pitfalls:

- 1) Branding—The story people tell when your church gets brought up in conversation—that’s your brand
- 2) Church Website- churches should invest in their websites with both the energy and resources that honor the importance of this crucial form of communication.
- 3) Social Media—The previous generation sees this as optional; however, the up-and-coming generation sees this the way we see oxygen. It is just part of

¹⁷ “33 Questions to Ask” *Pastor.Com*, accessed March 4, 2015, Pastor.com/dare-audit-churchs-communication-strategy.

the air that people are breathing. Do you have a Facebook page that engages its fans and followers and that extends your preaching?

- 4) Print Design—Even though experts claim that print is dying, most people walking through the doors of a church on Sunday will expect some kind of bulletin to know what is going on.
- 5) Communications Systems—This entails the process to follow when an event is planned so that event gets the maximum communication coverage and does not conflict with other events.¹⁸

Leaders need to be visible at ministry functions. The following questions have been posed to us in leadership positions by some members of the congregation at vital church events i.e. the Men's Prayer Breakfast such as, "Where are the men who are the leaders in this church? Do they care to know that we are here? Do they care to know us? How will they ever know our thoughts, share our pain and then pray with us as a family that prays together, stays together? In their book: *TALK, Inc.*, Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind comment that the "*I's Have It.*" Hold on yet, this is not tantamount to the voting procedure that rushes the resolution of an agenda item at many church meetings. The point that these authors are emphasizing is organizational conversation or communication. The four I's they relayed that can build trust and cause leaders to engender respect from their underlings are Intimacy, Interactivity, Inclusion, Intentionality. Let's look at each briefly:

- Intimacy—Leaders reduce distance when they engage in conversation with others in the organization. Conversation intimacy equips leaders (emphasis the writer) to manage change and helps them to solidify buy-in. In short, it allows them to build trust through talk.
- Interactivity—Talk is a two-way affair... organizational conversation replaces the one-way structure of corporate communication with a dynamic process in which leaders *talk* with employees and not just to them. The authors remind the readers that they should be mindful of changes in the technology of communication, i.e. social media and

¹⁸ "33 Questions to Ask."

incorporate them in their forms of communication.

- Inclusion—invites all participants to put their own ideas, and indeed their hearts and souls into the conversation mix. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated that “we are caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny, whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”¹⁹
- Intentionality—This puts a premium on the verbal messages as the agenda aligns with the strategic objectives of the organization. The authors then conclude that intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion serve to open up the conversation, and the element of intentionality serves to “close the loop.”²⁰

Keith Hughey summarized it by saying, “Effective leaders model the right behaviors and values. They paint and reinforce an inspiring vision. They enable their people to see themselves in that picture. They communicate. They also listen. They welcome rather than discourage innovation and challenges to the status quo. They encourage and engage their people as partners in the work. That's why those in leadership roles matter so much.”²¹

Recommendations And Conclusion

The recommended model for equipping the laity so that they can answer their call to ministry centers on the following:

1. *Education* (training) commences after evangelism. Churches do not have to look too far for reverences. The templates were written in the Pentateuch and in the New Testament. Firstly, teach the people God's decrees and then select capable, trustworthy, and God-fearing brothers/sisters who have demonstrated that they are ready to lead others by their examples. All Christians should

¹⁹ *Religious Leadership*, 340.

²⁰ Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind, *Talk, Inc. How Trusted Leaders Use Conversation to Power Their Organizations* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2012), 4, 5.

²¹ J. Kelley Hughey, “Helping Clients leverage Their Human Capital,” accessed March 4, 2015, <http://www.keith@jkeithhughey.com>.

submit to be trained including the leaders. This is a vertical as well as horizontal process as there are gradations of training. Several levels of training should be made available. Church leaders cannot and should not constantly excuse themselves from training/studying the Word. The idea of spiritual growth or training is for us to be more like Jesus.

2. *Communication*—The *I's Have It* type of communication should be implemented from the first meeting at the church's entrance to the ring to the receptionist or to the higher ministry leaders. This will engender a conversation of intimacy and trust at all levels. A front line reception should be established i.e. receptionist or ministry leader.
3. *Establish a Congregational Care Ministry* that really cares—Segregation, favoritism or elitism should be eschewed. We are all created in the image and likeness of God and our Lord is not a respecter of persons. The interest of the 'least of these' should be elevated as the Lord is close to them. Daniel Migliore notes Christ's solidarity with the poor as "he is always present with the hungry, the sick, and the imprisoned and cautioned the church to have an outstretched and helping hand to them as those who minister to the wretched of the earth minister to Him".²² Besides, 'the church is one foundation and it is Jesus Christ Our Lord'. Paul says to the Galatians: "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3:26-28. Dietrich Bonhoeffer chimes in when he states that 'where God's people stand before him ill-treated, miserable, and poor, Jesus sees God's field ripe for harvest.'²³ Thumma and Bird again warn that although the church is influenced by several sociological factors, it should not be perceived as a social club.²⁴
4. *Institute a Small Group System*—Churches can tailor it to their current needs as churches in small towns interact differently from large churches in large cities. John Wesley introduced this in Methodism and it worked. Others such as Rick Warren propounds that this should be replicated over and over. "It doesn't really matter what rationale you use to start new groups, just keep

²² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 273.

²³ *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Discipleship*, vol. 4, edited by Berthe, Eberhard, et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 183.

Vincent J. Pastro "Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Model for Religious Leadership," In *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook* ed. Sharon Henderson Callahan (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2013), 620.

²⁴ Thumma & Bird, *The Other 80 Percent*, 26.

starting them. For Warren, the small group allows the church to grow larger and smaller at the same time. Large in number of folks reached, connected and cared for and smaller in the place people are connected. We don't really have community in worship. We do not know each other nor have the time to know each other. The small group becomes the place of care, assimilation, healing, accountability, study and community."²⁵ This will provide all members the opportunity to be heard or missed. 'If one is not missed, one does not really belong.' This will eschew the 'inclusion but not belonging' malaise. Former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Desmond Tutu puts it succinctly when he proclaimed that "spirit inspired leadership impacts the 'common good worldview' as one cannot be human all by himself. The pan-African ethic of "Ubuntu" is very relevant as "I am what I am because of who you are" points to the interconnectedness as the essence of human being."²⁶

5. *Senior Pastor's Connection to the Congregation*—The Senior Pastor must be constantly viewed as connected to the congregation. This one perception can weave a constant thread into the fabric of the congregation. Both the Focus Group and the Context Associates recommended that he attends the first New Members Class and shares his vision with the new members. Warren also concurred with that suggestion. They also recommended that the church institute a meet and greet session for visitors to meet the Senior Pastor after church. This may seem overwhelming for a pastor with a large congregation; however, we may want to heed to scholar and author Sandra L. Barnes who posited that Pastors, especially Pastors of Black Megachurches, exert enormous influence on their congregations that rival those found in large corporations.²⁷ Most church members would admit that besides their salvation, what attracts and keeps them connected to the ministry are the charisma, leadership, teaching and preaching of the senior pastor.
6. *Accountability*—Leaders should be held accountable. A conscientious review of their stewardship in the ministries or boards should be regularly assessed. Accountability is not just a business tenet. Our Lord reminds us that at the end of our lives, each of us shall give an account of ourselves to God. Romans 14:12. Periodic evaluations are not unusual to all including church leaders in the secular world. Most of them have either done some or they have received them. It is called "Feedback." The church scholars may want to propose a spiritual terminology. *Evaluations* should be top to bottom, bottom-top and side-ways. This means that leaders should evaluate their ministry members, the ministry members should also be given the opportunity to evaluate their

²⁵ Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 325-326.

²⁶ Bill Grace, "Spirit Inspired Leadership and the Common Good Worldview: Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu" in *Religious Leadership: A Reference Handbook*, ed. Sharon Henderson Callahan (London, UK: Sage Publications, 2013), 560.

²⁷ Sandra L. Barnes, *Black Megachurch Culture* (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 69.

leaders, and all members of a particular Board or organization should be given an opportunity to evaluate each other. A prayerful removal process should be instituted for those who will not grow or avail themselves for growth, are causing more pain than healing and for those who are misplaced.

7. *Term limits for Ministry Heads and Board members*—Those who serve well may get a new term. This will alleviate the perception that some leaders cannot be removed from their posts even when they are causing more harm than good. Term limits may not be necessary as the accountability and evaluation processes will weed out the ‘bad apples.’
8. *Liberalize and diversify the leadership of Boards and Organizations*—If there is any place where the ‘haves and have-nots’ can commune together, it is at the feet of Jesus. Pleuthner refers to it as communion of management and labor so that they understand each other’s position and come to an amicable solution to the church’s challenges. Considerable research suggests that when the leadership reflects the full diversity of the membership and draws on the human and social capital of all members, it is more likely to be successful.²⁸
9. *A Suggestion Box system*—This should be instituted to give members who feel that their voices are not heard the opportunity to make suggestions and express their opinions or frustrations on the issues or challenges that beset the church. *In the book, the other 80 percent*, Thumma and Bird suggest that “one of the ways that a church should address its waning involvement and participation ratio is first, take an assessment of the opinions of members – listen to them (the highly involved and the least engaged) about what motivates and hinders commitment in your congregation.”

In conclusion, the writer feels blessed in commencing this conversation of the inertia and inactivity of the ‘other 80 percent’ at Turner Chapel AME Church. As a layman, he thinks it was easy for other laymen and women to relate to him. He prays that this conversation leads to not only tackling the challenges that keep the congregation standing at the brink of Canaan but by prayerful actions, the church shall possess the land that flows with milk and honey. The Lord is calling us to eviscerate the mountain of the church’s mortgage, to evangelize Cobb County and metro Atlanta, equip and involve the large segment of the inactive membership, perhaps construct and operate a Christian School and fill the new sanctuary as was accomplished in the old church, the school

²⁸ Thumma and Bird, *The Other 80 Percent*, 89.

auditoriums and the Recreational Hall with active and excited members reminiscent of those who joined a generation ago. A weary church member remarked in a survey in the Other 80 percent “I want to see a growing church of active persons who are not the same old active group of people and I want to see a pastor who can stop as many people going out the back door as are coming in the front door. This then becomes an intentional team effort of both the clergy and the laity, as leadership has to come from the whole congregation; however, the clergy and pastoral leadership are the linchpin. A congregation is incredibly lazy in expecting the pastor to do everything; which is the reason churches must learn to exert lay leadership.”²⁹

It is hoped that this project not only proved beneficial to Turner Chapel AME Church and its members but also serves as a replicable model for all churches placated with the challenge of equipping and involving the majority of its members into active participation in its various ministries. May God bless this project and provide the increase as people are equipped and prepared for service and that all hindrances are removed from their path so that they can lead fruitful and fulfilled lives in the Lord. May this project also serve to glorify God as people are used to impact not only their various contexts but also the universal church. To God be the glory for continually doing great things!

²⁹ Thumma and Bird, *The Other 80 Percent*, 94.

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